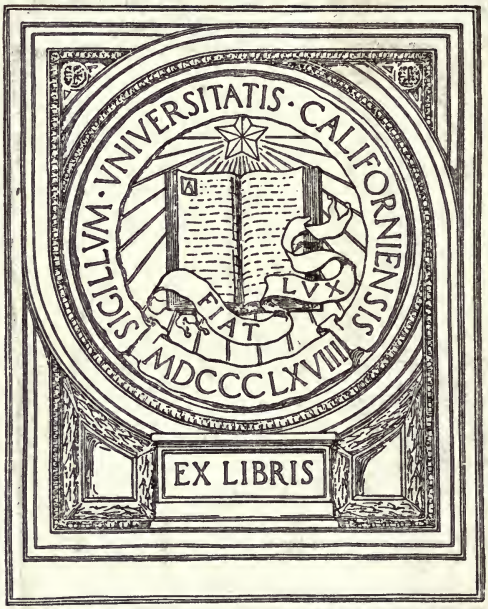

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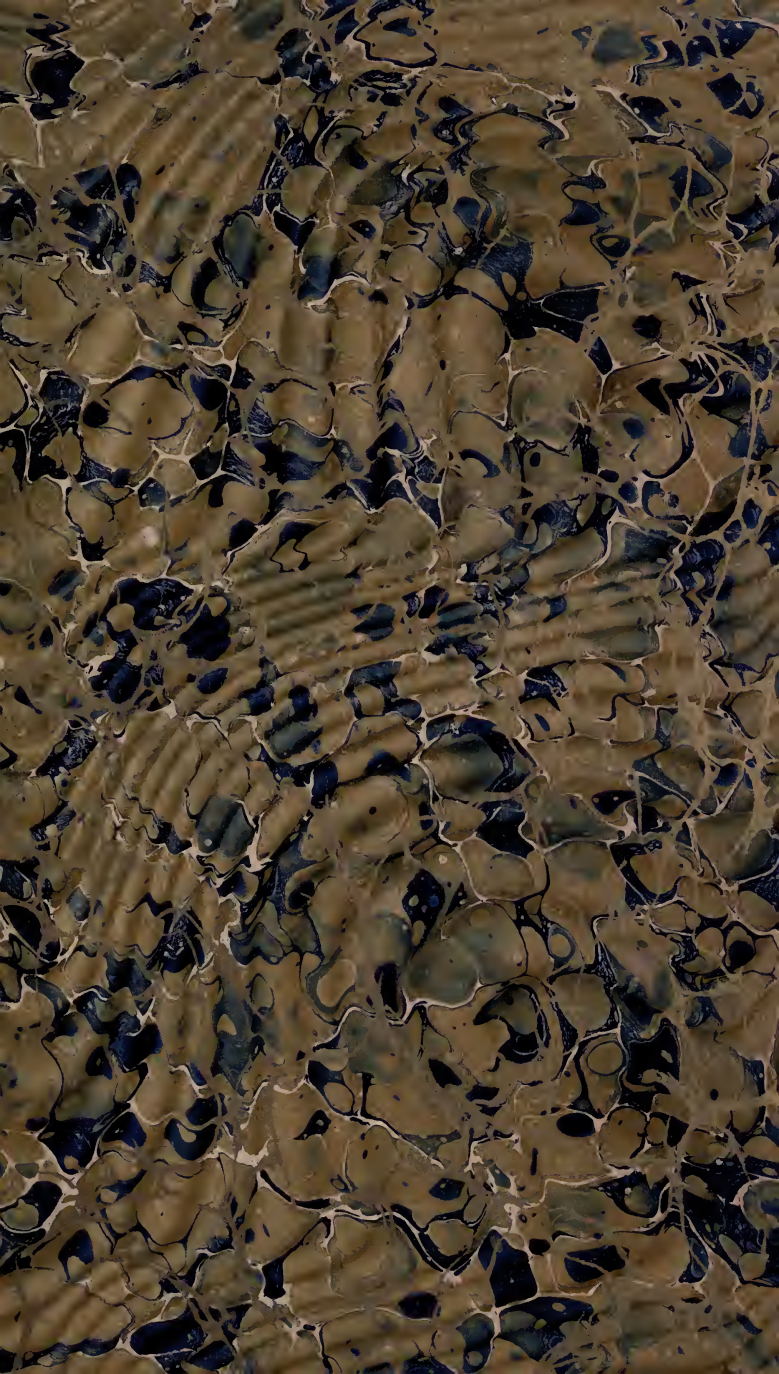

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The Authentic Portrait of Christopher Columbus

From a painting in the possession of Mr. William Harrison Bradley, of Chicago, United States Consul at Nice

Author's Autograph Edition

LIFE AND VOYAGES OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

& THE VOYAGES & DISCOVERIES OF THE COMPANIONS OF COLUMBUS

BY WASHINGTON IRVING

Volume I.

NEW YORK & LONDON G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS 1895

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The Knickerbocker Press, New York

The Life and Voyages
of
Christopher Columbus

AUTHOR'S AUTOGRAPH EDITION

Preface.

BEING at Bordeaux, in the winter of 1825–6, I received a letter from Mr. Alexander Everett, Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States at Madrid, informing me of a work then in the press, edited by Don Martin Fernandez de Navarrete, Secretary of the Royal Academy of History, etc., etc., containing a collection of documents relative to the voyages of Columbus, among which were many of a highly important nature, recently discovered. Mr. Everett, at the same time, expressed an opinion that a version of the work into English, by one of our own country, would be peculiarly desirable. I concurred with him in the opinion; and, having for some time intended a visit to Madrid, I shortly afterwards set off for that capital, with an idea of undertaking, while there, the translation of the work.

Soon after my arrival the publication of Mr. Navarrete made its appearance. I found it to contain many documents, hitherto unknown, which threw additional lights on the discovery of the New World; and which reflected the greatest credit on the industry and activity of the learned editor. Still the whole presented rather a mass of rich materials for history, than a history itself. And invaluable as such stores may be to the laborious inquirer, the sight of disconnected papers and official documents is apt to be repulsive to the general reader, who seeks for a clear and continued narrative. These circumstances made me hesitate in my proposed undertaking; yet the subject was of so interesting and national a kind, that I could not willingly abandon it.

On considering the matter more maturely I perceived that, although there were many books, in many languages, relative to Columbus, they all contained limited and incomplete accounts of his life and voyages; while numerous valuable tracts on the subject existed only in manuscript or in the form of letters, journals, and public muniments. It appeared to me that a history, faithfully digested from these various materials, was a desideratum in literature, and would be a more satisfactory occupation to myself, and a more acceptable work to my

country, than the translation I had contemplated.

I was encouraged to undertake such a work by the great facilities which I found within my reach at Madrid. I was resident under the roof of the American Consul, O. Rich, Esq., one of the most indefatigable bibliographers in Europe, who, for several years, had made particular researches after every document relative to the early history of America. In his extensive and curious library I found one of the best collections extant of Spanish colonial history, containing many documents for which I might search elsewhere in vain. This he put at my absolute command, with a frankness and unreserve seldom to be met with among the possessors of such rare and valuable works; and his library has been my main resource throughout the whole of my labors.

I found also the Royal Library of Madrid, and the library of the Jesuits' College of San Isidro, two noble and extensive collections, open to access, and conducted with great order and liberality. From Don Martin Fernandez de Navarrete, who communicated various valuable and curious pieces of information discovered in the course of his researches, I received the most obliging assistance; nor can I refrain from testifying my admiration of the self-

sustained zeal of that estimable man, one of the last veterans of Spanish literature, who is almost alone, yet indefatigable in his labors, in a country where at present literary exertion meets with but little excitement or reward.

I must acknowledge, also, the liberality of the Duke of Veraguas, the descendant and representative of Columbus, who submitted the archives of his family to my inspection, and took a personal interest in exhibiting the treasures they contained. Nor, lastly, must I omit my deep obligation to my excellent friend Don Antonio de Uguina, treasurer of the Prince Francisco, a gentleman of talents and erudition, and particularly versed in the history of his country and its dependencies. To his unwearied investigations and silent and unavowed contributions, the world is indebted for much of the accurate information, recently imparted, on points of early colonial history. In the possession of this gentleman are most of the papers of his deceased friend, the late historian Muñoz, who was cut off in the midst of his valuable labors. These, and various other documents, have been imparted to me by Don Antonio, with a kindness and urbanity which greatly increased, yet lightened the obligation.

With these, and other aids incidentally afforded me by my local situation, I have endeav-

ored, to the best of my abilities, and making the most of the time which I could allow myself during a sojourn in a foreign country, to construct this history. I have diligently collated all the works that I could find relative to my subject, in print and manuscript; comparing them, as far as in my power, with original documents, those sure lights of historic research; endeavoring to ascertain the truth amid those contradictions which will inevitably occur, where several persons have recorded the same facts, viewing them from different points, and under the influence of different interests and feelings.

In the execution of this work I have avoided indulging in mere speculations or general reflections, excepting such as rose naturally out of the subject, preferring to give a minute and circumstantial narrative, omitting no particular that appeared characteristic of the persons, the events, or the times; and endeavoring to place every fact in such a point of view, that the reader might perceive its merits, and draw his own maxims and conclusions.

As many points of the history required explanations, drawn from contemporary events and the literature of the times, I have preferred, instead of incumbering the narrative, to give detached illustrations at the end of the work.

This also enabled me to indulge in greater latitude of detail, where the subject was of a curious or interesting nature, and the sources of information such as not to be within the common course of reading.

After all, the work is presented to the public with extreme diffidence. All that I can safely claim is, an earnest desire to state the truth, an absence from prejudices respecting the nations mentioned in my history, a strong interest in my subject, and a zeal to make up by assiduity for many deficiences of which I am conscious.

WASHINGTON IRVING.

MADRID, 1827.

P. S.—I have been surprised at finding myself accused by some American writer of not giving sufficient credit to Don Martin Fernandez de Navarrete for the aid I have derived from his collection of documents. I had thought I had sufficiently shown, in the preceding preface, which appeared with my first edition, that his collection first prompted my work, and subsequently furnished its principal materials; and that I had illustrated this by citations at the foot of almost every page. In preparing this revised edition I have carefully and conscientiously examined into the matter, but find nothing to add to the acknowledgments already made.

To show the feelings of Mr. Navarrete himself with respect to my work and myself, I subjoin an extract from a letter received from that excellent man; and a passage from the introduction to the third volume of his collection. Nothing but the desire to vindicate myself on this head would induce me to publish extracts so laudatory.

From a letter dated Madrid, April 1st, 1831.

"I congratulate myself that the documents and notices which I published in my collection about the first occurrences in the history of America, have fallen into hands so able to appreciate their authenticity, to examine them critically, and to circulate them in all directions; establishing fundamental truths which hitherto have been adulterated by partial or systematic writers."

"Yo me complazeo en que los documentos y noticias que publico en mi coleccion sobre los primeros acontecimientos de la historia de America, hayan recaido en manos tan hábiles para apreciar su autenticidad, para examinar las con critica y propagarlas por todos partes echando los fundamentos de la verdad que hasta ahora há sido tan adulterada par los escritores parciales ò sistemáticos."

In the introduction to the third volume of his *Collection of Spanish Voyages*, Mr. Navarrete cites various testimonials he has received since the publication of his two first volumes, of the utility of his work to the republic of letters.

"A signal proof of this," he continues, "is just given us by Mr. Washington Irving in the *History of the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus*, which he has published with a success as general as it is well merited. We said in our introduction that we did not propose to write the history of the Admiral, but to publish notes and materials that it might be written with veracity; and it is fortunate that the first person to profit by them should be a literary man, judicious and erudite, already known in his own country and in Europe by other works of merit. Resident in Madrid, exempt from the rivalries which have influenced some European natives with respect to Columbus and his discoveries; having an opportunity to examine excellent books and precious manuscripts; to converse with persons instructed in these matters, and having always at hand the authentic documents which we had just published, he has been enabled to give to his history that fulness, impartiality, and exactness, which make it much superior to those of the writers who preceded him. To this he adds his regular

method, and convenient distribution; his style animated, pure, and elegant; the notice of various personages who mingled in the concerns of Columbus; and the examination of various questions, in which always shine sound criticism, erudition, and good taste."

"Insigne prueba de esto mismo acaba de darnos el Señor Washington Irving en la *Historia de la Vida y de los Viages de Cristóbal Colon* que ha publicado con una aceptacion tan general como bien merecida. Digimos en nuestra introduccion (1, § 56, pag. lxxxii.) que no nos proponiamos escribir la historia de aqual almirante, sino publicar noticias y materiales para que se escribiese con veracidad, y es una fortuna que el primero que se haya aprovechado de ellas sea un literato juicioso y erudito, conocido ya en su patria y en Europa por otras obras apreciables. Colocado en Madrid exento de las rivalidades que han dominado entre algunas naciones Europeas sobre Colon y sus descubrimientos; con la proporcion de examinar excelentes libros y preciosos manuscritos, de tratar á personas instruidas en estas materias, y teniendo siempre á la mano los autenticos documentos que acabamos de publicar, ha logrado dar á su historia aquella extension imparcialidad y exactitud que la hacen muy

superior á las de los escritores que le precedieron. Agrégase á esto su metódico arreglo y conveniente distribucion; su astilo animado, puro y elegante; la noticia de varios personages que intervenieron en los sucesos de Colon, y el exámen de varias cuestiones en que luce siempre la mas sana critica, la erudicion y buen gusto."—*Prologo al tomo* 3°.

ARMS OF COLUMBUS.

Contents.

PAGE

PREFACE v

BOOK I.

INTRODUCTION 3

CHAPTER

I.—Birth, Parentage, and Early Life of Columbus 7

II.—Early Voyages of Columbus 15

III.—Progress of Discovery under Prince Henry of Portugal 23

IV.—Residence of Columbus at Lisbon—Ideas concerning Islands in the Ocean . . 34

V.—Grounds for Columbus' Belief in the Existence of Undiscovered Lands in the West 44

VI.—Correspondence of Columbus with Paulo Toscanelli—Proposition of Columbus to the Portuguese Court—Departure from Portugal 58

BOOK II.

CHAPTER PAGE

I.—Proceedings of Columbus after Leaving Portugal—His Applications in Spain—Characters of Ferdinand and Isabella . 79

II.—Columbus at the Court of Spain . . 91

III.—Columbus before the Council of Salamanca 99

IV.—Further Applications at the Court of Castile—Columbus Follows the Court in its Campaigns 111

V.—Columbus at the Convent of La Rabida . 123

VI.—Application to the Court at the Time of the Surrender of Granada . . . 131

VII.—Arrangement with the Spanish Sovereigns—Preparations for the Expedition at the Port of Palos 141

VIII.—Columbus at the Port of Palos—Preparations for the Voyage of Discovery . 148

BOOK III.

I.—Departure of Columbus on his First Voyage 161

II.—Continuation of the Voyage—First Notice of the Variation of the Needle . . 170

III.—Continuation of the Voyage—Various Terrors of the Seamen 176

IV.—Continuation of the Voyage—Discovery of Land 187

BOOK IV.

I.—First Landing of Columbus in the New World 205

CHAPTER PAGE
II.—Cruise among the Bahama Islands . . 217
III.—Discovery and Coasting of Cuba . . 228
IV.—Further Coasting of Cuba . . . 241
V.—Search after the Supposed Island of Babeque—Desertion of the *Pinta* . . 251
VI.—Discovery of Hispaniola 258
VII.—Coasting off Hispaniola 268
VIII.—Shipwreck 276
IX.—Transactions with the Natives . . 282
X.—Building of the Fortress of La Navidad . 292
XI.—Regulation of the Fortress of La Navidad—Departure of Columbus for Spain . 299

BOOK V.

I.—Coasting towards the Eastern End of Hispaniola—Meeting with Pinzon—Affair with the Natives at the Gulf of Samana 309
II.—Return Voyage—Violent Storms—Arrival at the Azores 322
III.—Transactions at the Island of St. Mary's . 332
IV.—Arrival at Portugal—Visit to the Court . 338
V.—Reception of Columbus at Palos . . 352
VI.—Reception of Columbus by the Spanish Court at Barcelona 359
VII.—Sojourn of Columbus at Barcelona—Attentions Paid to him by the Sovereigns and Courtiers 367
APPENDIX 377

Illustrations.

PAGE

THE AUTHENTIC PORTRAIT OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS . . . . . *Frontispiece*
From a painting in the possession of Mr. William Harrison Bradley, of Chicago, United States Consul at Nice.

ARMS OF COLUMBUS xiv

MEDITERRANEAN GALLEY IN THE TIME OF COLUMBUS 15
Based on a design in Lane-Poole's "Barbary Corsairs."

PRINCE HENRY OF PORTUGAL 24
From an engraving of the miniature in the MS. of "The Discovery of Guinea," 1448.

ORIENTAL TRADERS' CAMELS 26
Redrawn from an old print.

THE CLADERA PORTRAIT OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS 46

PART OF A TERRESTRIAL GLOBE 55
Made at Nuremberg in the year 1492, by Martin Behem.

JOHN II. OF PORTUGAL 63
From Faria y Sousa's "Historia del Reyno de Portugal."

FERDINAND, KING OF SPAIN 84
Redrawn from an old print.

PAGE

ISABELLA, QUEEN OF SPAIN 87
Redrawn from an old print.

D. PEDRO GONZALEZ DE MENDOZA . . . 95
From "Viage de Espagña," by Antonia Ponz, Madrid, 1788.

DEPARTURE OF A FLEET 108
From Philipono's "Nova Typis."

THE CONVENT OF LA RABIDA 123
Redrawn from Manning's "Spanish Pictures."

THE CONVENT OF LA RABIDA 124

JUAN PEREZ DE MARCHENA 126
Redrawn from an old print.

PALOS 148
Redrawn from an old print.

PORT OF PALOS 150

SHIPS OF COLUMBUS 155

COLUMBUS TAKING LEAVE OF FERDINAND AND ISABELLA 166
From De Bry's "Voyages."

COLUMBUS ON THE DECK OF HIS SHIP WITH AN ASTROLABE IN HIS HAND 170
From De Bry's "Voyages."

COLUMBUS DISCOVERING THE VARIATION OF THE COMPASS 174
From De Lorgue's "Columbus."

A CARAVEL UNDER SAIL 180
From Columbus' first letter.

THE SHIP OF COLUMBUS, "THE OCEAN WAVE" . 190
From Columbus' first letter.

NATIVE HUTS, HAMACS, ETC. 222
Redrawn from Gottfriedt's "Newe Welt."

PAGE

THE BERWICK-ALBA PORTRAIT OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS 232

NATIVES DANCING AND SMOKING TOBACCO . . 244
Redrawn from Gottfriedt's "Newe Welt."

CAPE AND MOLE OF ST. NICHOLAS . . . 258
From St. Mery's "Vue de St. Dominique."

DISCOVERY OF HISPANIOLA 262
From Herrera's "History of the West Indies."

GALLEY COASTING THE ISLAND OF HISPANIOLA . 266

NATIVES CARRYING A CACIQUE 272
Redrawn from Herrera's "History of the West Indies."

NATIVES DANCING 283
Redrawn from Gottfriedt's "Newe Welt."

THE PARMIGIANO PORTRAIT OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS 296

MAP OF THE ISLAND OF HISPANIOLA . . . 304
Redrawn from Wytfliet's "West Indies."

LANDING PARTY ATTACKED BY NATIVES . . 316
Reduction of fac-simile from Gottfriedt's "Newe Welt."

NEARING LAND ON RETURN VOYAGE . . . 330
From an old print.

THE ROCK OF CINTRA AT THE MOUTH OF THE TAGUS RIVER 342
From Kinsey's "Portugal."

RECEPTION OF COLUMBUS AT BARCELONA—RETURN FROM FIRST VOYAGE 362
From an old print.

COLUMBUS AND THE EGG 372
From De Bry's "Voyages."

Book II.

THE LIFE AND VOYAGES OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

Introduction.

WHETHER in old times, beyond the reach of history or tradition, and in some remote period of civilization, when, as some imagine, the arts may have flourished to a degree unknown to those whom we term the Ancients, there existed an intercourse between the opposite shores of the Atlantic; whether the Egyptian legend narrated by Plato, respecting the island of Atalantis, was indeed no fable, but the obscure tradition of some vast country engulfed by one of those mighty convulsions of our globe which have left traces of the ocean on the summits of lofty mountains, must ever remain matters of vague

and visionary speculation. As far as authenticated history extends, nothing was known of *terra firma* and the islands of the western hemisphere until their discovery towards the close of the fifteenth century. A wandering bark may occasionally have lost sight of the landmarks of the old continents, and been driven by tempests across the wilderness of waters long before the invention of the compass, but never returned to reveal the secrets of the ocean. And though from time to time some document has floated to the shores of the Old World, giving to its wondering inhabitants evidences of land far beyond their watery horizon, yet no one ventured to spread a sail, and seek that land enveloped in mystery and peril. Or, if the legends of the Scandinavian voyagers be correct, and their mysterious Vinland was the coast of Labrador, or the shore of Newfoundland, they had but transient glimpses of the New World, leading to no certain or permanent knowledge, and in a little time lost again to mankind.* Certain it is that at the beginning of the fifteenth century, when the most intelligent minds were seeking in every direction for the scattered lights of geographical knowledge, a profound

* See Appendix, article "Scandinavian Discoveries."

ignorance prevailed among the learned as to the western regions of the Atlantic; its vast waters were regarded with awe and wonder, seeming to bound the world as with a chaos, into which conjecture could not penetrate, and enterprise feared to adventure. We need no greater proofs of this than the description given of the Atlantic by Xerif al Edrisi, surnamed The Nubian, an eminent Arabian writer, whose countrymen were the boldest navigators of the Middle Ages, and possessed all that was then known of geography:

"The ocean," he observes, "encircles the ultimate bounds of the inhabited earth, and all beyond it is unknown. No one has been able to verify anything concerning it, on account of its difficult and perilous navigation, its great obscurity, its profound depth, and frequent tempests; through fear of its mighty fishes and its haughty winds; yet there are many islands in it, some peopled, others uninhabited. There is no mariner who dares to enter into its deep waters; or, if any have done so, they have merely kept along its coasts, fearful of departing from them. The waves of this ocean, although they roll as high as mountains, yet maintain themselves without breaking; for if they broke it would be impossible for ship to plough them." *

* *Description of Spain*, by Xerif al Edrisi. Conde's Spanish translation. Madrid, 1799.

It is the object of the following work to relate the deeds and fortunes of the mariner who first had the judgment to divine and the intrepidity to brave the mysteries of this perilous deep; and who, by his hardy genius, his inflexible constancy, and his heroic courage, brought the ends of the earth into communication with each other. The narrative of his troubled life is the link which connects the history of the Old World with that of the New.

Chapter I.

BIRTH, PARENTAGE, AND EARLY LIFE OF COLUMBUS.

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS, or Colombo, as the name is written in Italian,* was born in the city of Genoa, about the year 1435. He was the son of Dominico Colombo, a wool-comber, and Susannah Fonatanarossa, his wife, and it would seem that his ancestors had followed the same handicraft for several generations in Genoa. Attempts have been made to prove him of illustrious descent, and several noble houses have laid claim to

* Columbus latinized his name in his letters, according to the usage of the time, when Latin was the language of learned correspondence. In subsequent life, when in Spain, he recurred to what was supposed to be the original Roman name of the family, Colonus, which he abbreviated to Colon, to adapt it to the Castilian tongue. Hence he is known in Spanish history as Christoval Colon. In the present work the name will be written Columbus, being the one by which he is most known throughout the world.

him since his name has become so renowned as to confer rather than receive distinction. It is possible some of them may be in the right, for the feuds in Italy in those ages had broken down and scattered many of the noblest families, and while some branches remained in the lordly heritage of castles and domains, others were confounded with the humblest population of the cities. The fact, however, is not material to his fame; and it is a higher proof of merit to be the object of contention among various noble families, than to be able to substantiate the most illustrious lineage. His son Fernando had a true feeling on the subject. "I am of opinion," says he, "that I should derive less dignity from any nobility of ancestry, than from being the son of such a father."*

Columbus was the oldest of four children; having two brothers, Bartholomew and Giacomo, or James (written Diego in Spanish), and one sister, of whom nothing is known but that she was married to a person in obscure life, called Giacomo Bavarello. At a very early age Columbus evinced a decided inclination for the sea; his education, therefore, was mainly directed to fit him for maritime life, but

*The reader will find the vexed questions about the age, birthplace, and lineage of Columbus severally discussed in the Appendix.

was as general as the narrow means of his father would permit. Besides the ordinary branches of reading, writing, grammar, and arithmetic, he was instructed in the Latin tongue, and made some proficiency in drawing and design. For a short time, also, he was sent to the University of Pavia, where he studied geometry, geography, astronomy, and navigation. He then returned to Genoa, where, according to a contemporary historian, he assisted his father in his trade of wool-combing.* This assertion is indignantly contradicted by his son Fernando, though there is nothing in it improbable, and he gives us no information of his father's occupation to supply its place. He could not, however, have remained long in this employment, as, according to his own account, he entered upon a nautical life when but fourteen years of age.†

In tracing the early history of a man like Columbus, whose actions have had a vast effect upon human affairs, it is interesting to notice how much has been owing to external

* Agostino Giustiniani, *Ann. de Genova.* His assertion has been echoed by other historians, viz., Anton Gallo, *De Navigatione Colombi*, etc., Muratori, tom. xxiii.; Barta Senaraga, *De Rebus Genuensibus*, Muratori, tom. xxiv.

† *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 4.

influences, how much to an inborn propensity of the genius. In the latter part of his life, when, impressed with the sublime events brought about through his agency, Columbus looked back upon his career with a solemn and superstitious feeling, he attributed his early and irresistible inclination for the sea, and his passion for geographical studies, to an impulse from the Deity preparing him for the high decrees he was chosen to accomplish.*

The nautical propensity, however, evinced by Columbus in early life, is common to boys of enterprising spirit and lively imagination brought up in maritime cities; to whom the sea is the high-road to adventure and the region of romance. Genoa, too, walled in and straitened on the land side by rugged mountains, yielded but little scope for enterprise on shore, while an opulent and widely extended commerce visiting every country, and a roving marine battling in every sea, naturally led forth her children upon the waves, as their propitious element. Many, too, were induced to emigrate by the violent factions which raged within the bosom of the city, and often dyed its streets with blood. An historian of Genoa laments this proneness of its youth to wander.

* Letter to the Castilian sovereigns, 1501.

"They go," said he, "with the intention of returning when they shall have acquired the means of living comfortably and honorably in their native place; but we know from long experience, that of twenty who thus depart scarce two return; either dying abroad, or taking to themselves foreign wives, or being loath to expose themselves to the tempest of civil discords which distract the republic." *

The strong passion for geographical knowledge, also, felt by Columbus in early life, and which inspired his after career, was incident to the age in which he lived. Geographical discovery was the brilliant path of light which was forever to distinguish the fifteenth century. During a long night of monkish bigotry and false learning, geography, with the other sciences, had been lost to the European nations. Fortunately it had not been lost to mankind: it had taken refuge in the bosom of Africa. While the pedantic schoolmen of the cloisters were wasting time and talent, and confounding erudition by idle reveries and sophistical dialectics, the Arabian sages, assembled at Senaar, were taking the measurement of a degree of latitude, and calculating the circumference of the earth, on the vast plains of Mesopotamia.

True knowledge, thus happily preserved, was now making its way back to Europe.

* Foglieta, *Istoria de Genova*, lib. ii.

The revival of science accompanied the revival of letters. Among the various authors which the awakening zeal for ancient literature had once more brought into notice, were Pliny, Pomponius Mela, and Strabo. From these was regained a fund of geographical knowledge, which had long faded from the public mind. Curiosity was aroused to pursue this forgotten path, thus suddenly reopened. A translation of the work of Ptolemy had been made into Latin, at the commencement of the century, by Emanuel Chrysoloras, a noble and learned Greek, and had thus been rendered more familiar to the Italian students. Another translation had followed, by James Angel de Scarpiaria, of which fair and beautiful copies became common in the Italian libraries.* The writings also began to be sought after of Averroes, Alfraganus, and other Arabian sages, who had kept the sacred fire of science alive during the interval of European darkness.

The knowledge thus reviving was limited and imperfect; yet, like the return of morning light, it seemed to call a new creation into existence, and broke with all the charm of wonder upon imaginative minds. They were surprised at their own ignorance of the world

* Andres, *Hist. B. Let.*, lib. iii., cap. 2.

around them. Every step was discovery, for every region beyond their native country was in a manner *terra incognita*.

Such was the state of information and feeling with respect to this interesting science in the early part of the fifteenth century. An interest still more intense was awakened by the discoveries which began to be made along the Atlantic coasts of Africa; and must have been particularly felt among a maritime and commercial people like the Genoese. To these circumstances may we ascribe the enthusiastic devotion which Columbus imbibed in his childhood for cosmographical studies, and which influenced all his after fortunes.

The short time passed by him at the University of Pavia was barely sufficient to give him the rudiments of the necessary sciences; the familiar acquaintance with them, which he evinced in after life, must have been the result of diligent self-schooling, in casual hours of study amid the cares and vicissitudes of a rugged and wandering life. He was one of those men of strong natural genius, who, from having to contend at their very outset with privations and impediments, acquire an intrepidity in encountering and a facility in vanquishing difficulties throughout their career. Such men learn to effect great purposes

with small means, supplying this deficiency by the resources of their own energy and intention. This, from his earliest commencement, throughout the whole of his life, was one of the remarkable features in the history of Columbus. In every undertaking the scantiness and apparent insufficiency of his means enhance the grandeur of his achievements.

MEDITERRANEAN GALLEY IN THE TIME OF COLUMBUS.

Chapter II.

EARLY VOYAGES OF COLUMBUS.

COLUMBUS, as has been observed, commenced his nautical career when about fourteen years of age. His first voyages were made with a distant relative named Colombo, a hardy veteran of the seas, who had risen to some distinction by his bravery, and is occasionally mentioned in old chronicles, sometimes as commanding a squadron of his own, sometimes as an admiral

in the Genoese service. He appears to have been bold and adventurous; ready to fight in any cause, and to seek quarrel wherever it might lawfully be found.

The seafaring life of the Mediterranean, in those days, was hazardous and daring. A commercial expedition resembled a warlike cruise, and the maritime merchant had often to fight his way from port to port. Piracy was almost legalized. The frequent feuds between the Italian states; the cruisings of the Catalonians; the armadas fitted out by private noblemen, who exercised a kind of sovereignty in their own domains, and kept petty armies and navies in their pay; the roving ships and squadrons of private adventurers, a kind of naval *condottieri* sometimes employed by hostile governments, sometimes scouring the seas in search of lawless booty: these, with the holy wars waged against the Mahometan powers, rendered the narrow seas, to which navigation was principally confined, scenes of hardy encounters and trying reverses.

Such was the rugged school in which Columbus was reared, and it would have been deeply interesting to have marked the early development of his genius amidst its stern adversities. All this instructive era of his history, however,

is covered with darkness. His son Fernando, who could have best elucidated it, has left it in obscurity, or has now and then perplexed us with cross lights ; perhaps unwilling, from a principle of mistaken pride, to reveal the indigence and obscurity from which his father so gloriously emerged.

The first voyage in which we have any account of his being engaged was a naval expedition, fitted out in Genoa in 1459 by John of Anjou, Duke of Calabria, to make a descent upon Naples, in the hope of recovering that kingdom for his father King Reinier, or Renato, otherwise called René, Count of Provence. The republic of Genoa aided him with ships and money. The brilliant nature of the enterprise attracted the attention of daring and restless spirits. The chivalrous nobleman, the soldier of fortune, the hardy corsair, the desperate adventurer, the mercenary partisan,—all hastened to enlist under the banner of Anjou. The veteran Colombo took a part in this expedition, either with galleys of his own, or as commander of the Genoese squadron, and with him embarked his youthful relative, the future discoverer.

The struggle of John of Anjou for the crown of Naples lasted about four years, with varied fortune, but was finally unsuccessful. The

naval part of the expedition, in which Columbus was engaged, signalized itself by acts of intrepidity; and at one time, when the Duke was reduced to take refuge in the island of Ischia, a handful of galleys scoured and controlled the bay of Naples.*

In the course of this gallant but ill-fated enterprise, Columbus was detached on a perilous cruise, to cut out a galley from the harbor of Tunis. This is incidentally mentioned by himself in a letter written many years afterwards.

"It happened to me," he says, "that King Reinier (whom God has taken to himself) sent me to Tunis, to capture the galley *Fernandina*, and when I arrived off the island of St. Pedro, in Sardinia, I was informed that there were two ships and a carrack with the galley; by which intelligence my crew were so troubled that they determined to proceed no farther, but to return to Marseilles for another vessel and more people; as I could not by any means compel them, I assented apparently to their wishes, altering the point of the compass and spreading all sail. It was then evening, and next morning we were within the Cape of Carthagena, while all were firmly of opinion that they were sailing towards Marseilles." †

We have no further record of this bold cruise

* Colenuccio, *Istoria de Nap.*, lib. vii., cap. 17.

† Letter of Columbus to the Catholic sovereigns, *vide Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 4.

into the harbor of Tunis ; but in the foregoing particulars we behold early indications of that resolute and persevering spirit which insured him success in his more important undertakings. His expedient to beguile a discontented crew into a continuation of the enterprise, by deceiving them with respect to the ship's course, will be found in unison with a stratagem of altering the reckoning, to which he had recourse in his first voyage of discovery.

During an interval of many years we have but one or two shadowy traces of Columbus. He is supposed to have been principally engaged on the Mediterranean and up the Levant ; sometimes in commercial voyages, sometimes in the warlike contests between the Italian states, sometimes in pious and predatory expeditions against the Infidels. Historians have made him in 1474 captain of several Genoese ships, in the service of Louis XI. of France, and endangering the peace between that country and Spain by running down and capturing Spanish vessels at sea, on his own responsibility, as a reprisal for an irruption of the Spaniards into Roussillon.* Again, in 1475, he is represented as brushing with his Genoese squadron, in ruffling bravado, by a

* Chauffepié, Suppl. to Bayle, vol. ii., article "Columbus."

Venetian fleet stationed off the island of Cyprus, shouting "Viva San Georgio!" the old war-cry of Genoa, thus endeavoring to pique the jealous pride of the Venetians, and provoke a combat, though the rival republics were at peace at the time.

These transactions, however, have been erroneously attributed to Columbus. They were the deeds, or misdeeds, either of his relative the old Genoese admiral, or of a nephew of the same, of kindred spirit, called Colombo the Younger, to distinguish him from his uncle. They both appear to have been fond of rough encounters, and not very scrupulous as to the mode of bringing them about. Fernando Columbus describes this Colombo the Younger as a famous corsair, so terrible for his deeds against the Infidels, that the Moorish mothers used to frighten their unruly children with his name. Columbus sailed with him occasionally, as he had done with his uncle, and, according to Fernando's account, commanded a vessel in his squadron on an eventful occasion.

Colombo the Younger, having heard that four Venetian galleys, richly laden, were on their return voyage from Flanders, lay in wait for them on the Portuguese coast, between Lisbon and Cape St. Vincent. A desperate

engagement took place; the vessels grappled each other, and the crews fought hand to hand and from ship to ship. The battle lasted from morning until evening, with great carnage on both sides. The vessel commanded by Columbus was engaged with a huge Venetian galley. They threw hand-grenades and other fiery missiles, and the galley was wrapped in flames. The vessels were fastened together by chains and grappling-irons, and could not be separated; both were involved in one conflagration, and soon became a mere blazing mass. The crews threw themselves into the sea; Columbus seized an oar, which was floating within reach, and being an expert swimmer, attained the shore, though full two leagues distant. "It pleased God," says his son Fernando, "to give him strength, that He might preserve him for greater things." After recovering from his exhaustion he repaired to Lisbon, where he found many of his Genoese countrymen, and was induced to take up his residence.*

Such is the account given by Fernando of his father's first arrival in Portugal, and it has been currently adopted by modern historians; but on examining various histories

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 5. See Appendix, article "Capture of the Venetian Galleys."

of the times, the battle here described appears to have happened several years after the date of the arrival of Columbus in that country. That he was engaged in the contest is not improbable; but he had previously resided for some time in Portugal. In fact, on referring to the history of that kingdom, we shall find, in the great maritime enterprises in which it was at that time engaged, ample attractions for a person of his inclinations and pursuits; and we shall be led to conclude that his first visit to Lisbon was not the fortuitous result of a desperate adventure, but was undertaken in a spirit of liberal curiosity, and in the pursuit of honorable fortune.

Chapter III.

PROGRESS OF DISCOVERY UNDER PRINCE HENRY OF PORTUGAL.

THE career of modern discovery had commenced shortly before the time of Columbus, and at the period of which we are treating was prosecuted with great activity by Portugal. Some have attributed its origin to a romantic incident in the fourteenth century. An Englishman of the name of Macham, flying to France with a lady of whom he was enamoured, was driven far out of sight of land by stress of weather, and after wandering about the high seas, arrived at an unknown and uninhabited island, covered with beautiful forests, which was afterwards called Madeira.* Others have treated this account as a fable, and have pronounced the Canaries to be the first-fruit of modern discovery. This famous group,

* See Appendix, article "Discovery of Madeira."

the Fortunate Islands of the ancients, in which they placed their garden of the Hesperides, and whence Ptolemy commenced to count the longitude, had been long lost to the world. There are vague accounts, it is true, of their having received casual visits at wide intervals during the obscure ages from the wandering bark of some Arabian, Norman, or Genoese adventurer; but all this was involved in uncertainty, and led to no beneficial result. It was not until the fourteenth century that they were effectually rediscovered, and restored to mankind. From that time they were occasionally visited by the hardy navigators of various countries. The greatest benefit produced by their discovery was, that the frequent expeditions made to them emboldened mariners to venture far upon the Atlantic, and familiarized them, in some degree, to its dangers.

The grand impulse to discovery was not given by chance, but was the deeply meditated effort of one master-mind. This was Prince Henry of Portugal, son of John I., surnamed The Avenger, and Philippa of Lancaster, sister of Henry IV. of England. The character of this illustrious man, from whose enterprises the genius of Columbus took excitement, deserves particular mention.

Having accompanied his father into Africa,

Prince Henry of Portugal

From an engraving of the miniature in the MS. of "The Discovery of Guinea," 1448

in an expedition against the Moors at Ceuta, he received much information concerning the coast of Guinea and other regions in the interior hitherto unknown to Europeans, and conceived an idea that important discoveries were to be made by navigating along the western coast of Africa. On returning to Portugal this idea became his ruling thought. Withdrawing from the tumult of a court to a country retreat in the Algarves, near Sagres, in the neighborhood of Cape St. Vincent and in full view of the ocean, he drew around him men eminent in science, and prosecuted the study of those branches of knowledge connected with the maritime arts. He was an able mathematician, and made himself master of all the astronomy known to the Arabians of Spain.

On studying the works of the ancients he found what he considered abundant proofs that Africa was circumnavigable. Eudoxus of Cyzicus was said to have sailed from the Red Sea into the ocean, and to have continued on to Gibraltar; and Hanno the Carthaginian, sailing from Gibraltar with a fleet of sixty ships and following the African coast, was said to have reached the shores of Arabia.* It is true these voyages had been discredited by

* See Appendix, article "Circumnavigation of Africa by the Ancients."

several ancient writers, and the possibility of circumnavigating Africa, after being for a long time admitted by geographers, was denied by Hipparchus, who considered each sea shut up and land-bound in its peculiar basin ; and that Africa was a continent continuing onward to the south pole, and surrounding the Indian Sea, so as to join Asia beyond the Ganges. This opinion had been adopted by Ptolemy, whose

ORIENTAL TRADERS' CAMELS.

works in the time of Prince Henry were the highest authority in geography. The Prince, however, clung to the ancient belief that Africa was circumnavigable, and found his opinion sanctioned by various learned men of more modern date. To settle this question and achieve the circumnavigation of Africa was an object worthy the ambition of a prince, and his mind was fired with the idea of the vast

benefits that would arise to his country should it be accomplished by Portuguese enterprise.

The Italians, or Lombards, as they were called in the north of Europe, had long monopolized the trade of Asia. They had formed commercial establishments at Constantinople and in the Black Sea, where they received the rich produce of the Spice Islands, lying near the equator; and the silks, the gums, the perfumes, the precious stones, and other luxurious commodities of Egypt and Southern Asia, and distributed them over the whole of Europe. The republics of Venice and Genoa rose to opulence and power in consequence of this trade. They had factories in the most remote parts, even in the frozen regions of Moscovy and Norway. Their merchants emulated the magnificence of princes. All Europe was tributary to their commerce. Yet this trade had to pass through various intermediate hands, subject to the delays and charges of internal navigation and the tedious and uncertain journeys of the caravan. For a long time the merchandise of India was conveyed by the Gulf of Persia, the Euphrates, the Indus, and the Oxus, to the Caspian and the Mediterranean seas; thence to take a new destination for the various marts of Europe. After the Soldan of Egypt had conquered the Arabs, and

restored trade to its ancient channel, it was still attended with great cost and delay. Its precious commodities had to be conveyed by the Red Sea; thence on the backs of camels to the banks of the Nile, whence they were transported to Egypt, to meet the Italian merchants. Thus, while the opulent traffic of the East was engrossed by these adventurous monopolists, the price of every article was enhanced by the great expense of transportation.

It was the grand idea of Prince Henry, by circumnavigating Africa to open a direct and easy route to the source of this commerce, to turn it in a golden tide upon his country. He was, however, before the age in thought, and had to counteract ignorance and prejudice, and to endure the delays to which vivid and penetrating minds are subjected, from the tardy co-operation of the dull and the doubtful. The navigation of the Atlantic was yet in its infancy. Mariners looked with distrust upon a boisterous expanse, which appeared to have no opposite shore, and feared to venture out of sight of the landmarks. Every bold headland and far-stretching promontory was a wall to bar their progress. They crept timorously along the Barbary shores, and thought they had accomplished a wonderful expedition when they had ventured a few degrees beyond the

Straits of Gibraltar. Cape Nun was long the limit of their daring; they hesitated to double its rocky point, beaten by winds and waves, and threatening to thrust them forth upon the raging deep.

Independent of these vague fears, they had others, sanctioned by philosophy itself. They still thought that the earth at the equator was girdled by a torrid zone, over which the sun held his vertical and fiery course, separating the hemispheres by a region of impassive heat. They fancied Cape Bojador the utmost boundary of secure enterprise, and had a superstitious belief that whoever doubled it would never return.* They looked with dismay upon the rapid currents of its neighborhood and the furious surf which beat upon its arid coast. They imagined that beyond it lay the frightful region of the torrid zone, scorched by a blazing sun—a region of fire, where the very waves which beat upon the shores boiled under the intolerable fervor of the heavens.

To dispel these errors, and to give a scope to navigation equal to the grandeur of his designs, Prince Henry established a naval college, and erected an observatory at Sagres, and he invited thither the most eminent professors of the nautical faculties, appointing as

* Mariana, *Hist. Esp.*, lib. ii., cap. 22.

president James of Mallorca, a man learned in navigation and skilful in making charts and instruments.

The effects of this establishment were soon apparent. All that was known relative to geography and navigation was gathered together and reduced to system. A vast improvement took place in maps. The compass was also brought into more general use, especially among the Portuguese, rendering the mariner more bold and venturous, by enabling him to navigate in the most gloomy day and in the darkest night. Encouraged by these advantages and stimulated by the munificence of Prince Henry, the Portuguese marine became signalized for the hardihood of its enterprises and the extent of its discoveries. Cape Bojador was doubled, the region of the tropics penetrated and divested of its fancied terrors, the greater part of the African coast from Cape Blanco to Cape Verde explored, and the Cape Verde and Azore islands, which lay three hundred leagues distant from the continent, were rescued from the oblivious empire of the ocean.

To secure the quiet prosecution and full enjoyment of his discoveries, Henry obtained the protection of a papal bull, granting to the crown of Portugal sovereign authority over all

the lands it might discover in the Atlantic, to India inclusive, with plenary indulgence to all who should die in these expeditions; at the same time menacing with the terrors of the Church, all who should interfere in these Christian conquests.*

Henry died on the 13th of November, 1473, without accomplishing the great object of his ambition. It was not until many years afterwards that Vasco de Gama, pursuing with a Portuguese fleet the track he had pointed out, realized his anticipations by doubling the Cape of Good Hope, sailing along the southern coast of India, and thus opening a highway for commerce to the opulent regions of the East. Henry, however, lived long enough to reap some of the richest rewards of a great and good mind. He beheld, through his means, his native country in a grand and active career of prosperity. The discoveries of the Portuguese were the wonder and admiration of the fifteenth century, and Portugal, from being one of the least among nations, suddenly rose to be one of the most important.

All this was effected, not by arms, but by arts; not by the stratagems of a cabinet, but by the wisdom of a college. It was the great achievement of a prince who has well been de-

* Vasconcellos, *Hist. de Juan II.*

scribed, "Full of thoughts of lofty enterprise, and acts of generous spirit"; one who bore for his device the magnanimous motto, "The talent to do good," the only talent worthy the ambition of princes.*

Henry, at his death, left it in charge to his country to prosecute the route to India. He had formed companies and associations by which commercial zeal was enlisted in the cause, and it was made a matter of interest and competition to enterprising individuals.† From time to time Lisbon was thrown into a tumult of excitement by the launching forth of some new expedition, or the return of a squadron with accounts of new tracts explored and new kingdoms visited. Everything was confident promise and sanguine anticipation. The miserable hordes of the African coast were magnified into powerful nations, and the voyagers continually heard of opulent countries farther on. It was as yet the twilight of geographic knowledge; imagination went hand in hand with discovery, and as the latter groped its slow and cautious way the former peopled all beyond with wonders. The fame of the Portuguese discoveries, and of the expeditions continually setting out, drew the atten-

* João de Barros, *Asia*, decad. i.

† Lafitau, *Conquêtes des Portugais*, tom. i., lib. i.

tion of the world. Strangers from all parts, the learned, the curious, and the adventurous, resorted to Lisbon to inquire into the particulars or to participate in the advantages of these enterprises. Among these was Christopher Columbus, whether thrown there, as has been asserted, by the fortuitous result of a desperate adventure, or drawn thither by liberal curiosity and the pursuit of honorable fortune.*

* Herrera, decad. i.

Chapter IV.

RESIDENCE OF COLUMBUS AT LISBON—IDEAS CONCERNING ISLANDS IN THE OCEAN.

COLUMBUS arrived at Lisbon about the year 1470. He was at that time in the full vigor of manhood, and of an engaging presence. Minute descriptions are given of his person by his son Fernando, by Las Casas, and others of his contemporaries.* According to these accounts, he was tall, well formed, muscular, and of an elevated and dignified demeanor. His visage was long, and neither full nor meagre; his complexion fair and freckled, and inclined to ruddy; his nose aquiline; his cheek-bones were rather high; his eyes light and gray, and apt to enkindle; his whole countenance had an air of

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 3. Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 2, MS.

authority. His hair, in his youthful days, was of a light color; but care and trouble, according to Las Casas, soon turned it gray, and at thirty years of age it was quite white. He was moderate and simple in diet and apparel, eloquent in discourse, engaging and affable with strangers, and his amiableness and suavity in domestic life strongly attached his household to his person. His temper was naturally irritable*; but he subdued it by the magnanimity of his spirit, comporting himself with a courteous and gentle gravity, and never indulging in any intemperance of language. Throughout his life he was noted for strict attention to the offices of religion, observing rigorously the fasts and ceremonies of the Church; nor did his piety consist in mere forms, but partook of that lofty and solemn enthusiasm with which his whole character was strongly tinctured.

While at Lisbon, he was accustomed to attend religious service at the chapel of the convent of All Saints. In this convent were certain ladies of rank, either residents as boarders, or in some religious capacity. With one of these Columbus became acquainted. She was Doña Felipa, daughter of Bartolomeo Moñis de Perestrello, an Italian cavalier,

* Illescas, *Hist. Pontifical*, lib. vi.

lately deceased, who had been one of the most distinguished navigators under Prince Henry, and had colonized and governed the island of Porto Santo. The acquaintance soon ripened into attachment, and ended in marriage. It appears to have been a match of mere affection, as the lady was destitute of fortune.

The newly married couple resided with the mother of the bride. The latter, perceiving the interest which Columbus took in all matters concerning the sea, related to him all she knew of the voyages and expeditions of her late husband, and brought him all his papers, charts, journals, and memorandums.* In this way he became acquainted with the routes of the Portuguese, their plans and conceptions; and having by his marriage and residence become naturalized in Portugal, he sailed occasionally in the expeditions to the coast of Guinea. When on shore he supported his family by making maps and charts. His narrow circumstances obliged him to observe a strict economy; yet we are told that he appropriated a part of his scanty means to the succor of his aged father at Genoa,† and to the education of his younger brothers.‡

* Oviedo, *Cronica de las Indias*, lib. ii., cap. 2.

† *Ibid.*

‡ Muñoz, *Hist. del N. Mundo*, lib. ii.

The construction of a correct map or chart, in those days, required a degree of knowledge and experience sufficient to entitle the possessor to distinction. Geography was but just emerging from the darkness which had enveloped it for ages. Ptolemy was still a standard authority. The maps of the fifteenth century display a mixture of truth and error, in which facts handed down from antiquity, and others revealed by recent discoveries, are confused with popular fables, and extravagant conjectures.* At such a period, when the passion for maritime discovery was seeking every aid to facilitate its enterprises, the knowledge and skill of an able cosmographer, like Columbus, would be properly appreciated, and the superior correctness of his maps and charts would give him notoriety among men of sci-

* The importance which began to be attached to cosmographical knowledge is evident from the distinction which Mauro, an Italian friar, obtained from having projected an universal map, esteemed the most accurate of the time. A fac-simile of this map, upon the same scale as the original, is now deposited in the British Museum, and it has been published, with a geographical commentary, by the learned Zurla. The Venetians struck a medal in honor of him, on which they denominated him Cosmographus Incomparabilis (*Colline del Bussol. Naut.*, p. 2, c. 5). Yet Ramusio, who had seen his map in the monastery of

ence. We accordingly find him, at an early period of his residence in Lisbon, in correspondence with Paulo Toscanelli, of Florence, one of the most scientific men of the day, whose communications had great influence in inspiriting him to his subsequent undertakings.

While his geographical labors thus elevated him to a communion with the learned, they were peculiarly calculated to foster a train of thoughts favorable to nautical enterprise. From constantly comparing maps and charts, and noting the progress and direction of discovery, he was led to perceive how much of the world remained unknown, and to meditate on the means of exploring it. His domestic concerns, and the connections he had formed by marriage, were all in unison with his vein of speculation. He resided for some time at the recently discovered island of Porto Santo, where his wife had inherited some property, and during his residence there she

San Michele de Murano, considers it merely an improved copy of a map brought from Cathay by Marco Polo (Ramusio, tom. ii., p. 17. Ed. Venet. 1606). We are told that Americus Vespucius paid one hundred and thirty ducats (equivalent to five hundred and fifty-five dollars in our time) for a map of sea and land, made at Mallorca, in 1439, by Gabriel de Valseca (De Barros, lib. i., cap. 15. *Derroto por Tofino Introd.*, p. 25).

bore him a son, whom he named Diego. This residence brought him, as it were, on the very frontier of discovery. His wife's sister was married to Pedro Correo, a navigator of note, who had at one time been governor of Porto Santo. Being frequently together in the familiar intercourse of domestic life, their conversation naturally turned upon the discoveries prosecuting in their vicinity along the African coasts; upon the long-sought-for route to India, and upon the possibility of some unknown lands existing in the west.

In their island residence, too, they must have been frequently visited by voyagers going to and from Guinea. Living thus, surrounded by the stir and bustle of discovery, communing with persons who had risen by it to fortune and honor, and voyaging in the very tracks of its recent triumphs, the ardent mind of Columbus kindled up to enthusiasm in the cause. It was a period of general excitement to all who were connected with maritime life, or who resided in the vicinity of the ocean. The recent discoveries had inflamed their imaginations, and had filled them with visions of other islands, of greater wealth and beauty, yet to be discovered in the boundless wastes of the Atlantic. The opinions and fancies of the ancients on the subject were

again put in circulation. The story of Antilla, a great island in the ocean, discovered by the Carthaginians, was frequently cited, and Plato's imaginary Atalantis once more found firm believers. Many thought that the Canaries and Azores were but wrecks which had survived its submersion, and that other and larger fragments of that drowned land might yet exist, in remoter parts of the Atlantic.

One of the strongest symptoms of the excited state of the popular mind at this eventful era, was the prevalence of rumors respecting unknown islands casually seen in the ocean. Many of these were mere fables, fabricated to feed the predominant humor of the public; many had their origin in the heated imaginations of voyagers, beholding islands in those summer clouds which lie along the horizon, and often beguile the sailor with the idea of distant lands.

On such airy basis, most probably, was founded the story told to Columbus by one Antonio Leone, an inhabitant of Madeira, who affirmed that sailing thence westward one hundred leagues he had seen three islands at a distance. But the tales of the kind most positively advanced and zealously maintained were those related by the people of the Canaries, who were long under a singular optical

delusion. They imagined that, from time to time, they beheld a vast island to the westward, with lofty mountains and deep valleys. Nor was it seen in cloudy and dubious weather, but in those clear days common to tropical climates, and with all the distinctness with which distant objects may be discerned in their pure, transparent atmosphere. The island, it is true, was only seen at intervals; while at other times, and in the clearest weather, not a vestige of it was to be descried. When it did appear, however, it was always in the same place and under the same form. So persuaded were the inhabitants of the Canaries of its reality, that application was made to the King of Portugal for permission to discover and take possession of it; and it actually became the object of several expeditions. The island, however, was never to be found, though it still continued occasionally to cheat the eye.

There were all kinds of wild and fantastic notions concerning this imaginary land. Some supposed it to be the Antilla mentioned by Aristotle; others, the island of Seven Cities, so called from an ancient legend of seven bishops, who, with a multitude of followers, fled from Spain at the time of its conquest by the Moors, and, guided by Heaven to some un-

known island in the ocean, founded on it seven splendid cities; while some considered it another legendary island, on which, it was said, a Scottish priest of the name of St. Brandan had landed, in the sixth century. This last legend passed into current belief. The fancied island was called by the name of St. Brandan, or St. Borondon, and long continued to be actually laid down in maps far to the west of the Canaries.* The same was done with the fabulous island of Antilla; and these erroneous maps and phantom islands have given rise at various times to assertions that the New World had been known prior to the period of its generally reputed discovery.

Columbus, however, considers all these appearances of land as mere illusions. He supposes that they may have been caused by rocks lying in the ocean, which, seen at a distance, under certain atmospherical influences, may have assumed the appearance of islands; or that they may have been floating islands, such as are mentioned by Pliny and Seneca and others, formed of twisted roots, or of a light and porous stone, and covered with trees, and which may have been driven about the ocean by the winds.

The islands of St. Brandan, of Antilla, and

* See Appendix, article "Island of St. Brandan."

of the Seven Cities have long since proved to be fabulous tales or atmospherical delusions. Yet the rumors concerning them derive interest, from showing the state of public thought with respect to the Atlantic, while its western regions were yet unknown. They were all noted down with curious care by Columbus, and may have had some influence over his imagination. Still, though of a visionary spirit, his penetrating genius sought in deeper sources for the aliment of its meditations. Aroused by the impulse of passing events, he turned anew, says his son Fernando, to study the geographical authors which he had read before, and to consider the astronomical reasons which might corroborate the theory gradually forming in his mind. He made himself acquainted with all that had been written by the ancients, or discovered by the moderns, relative to geography. His own voyages enabled him to correct many of their errors and appreciate many of their theories. His genius having thus taken its decided bent, it is interesting to notice from what a mass of acknowledged facts, rational hypotheses, fanciful narrations, and popular rumors his grand project of discovery was wrought out by the strong workings of his vigorous mind.

Chapter V.

GROUNDS FOR COLUMBUS' BELIEF IN THE EXISTENCE OF UNDISCOVERED LANDS IN THE WEST.

IT has been attempted, in the preceding chapters, to show how Columbus was gradually kindled up to his grand design by the spirit and events of the times in which he lived. His son Fernando, however, undertakes to furnish the precise data on which his father's plan of discovery was founded.* "He does this," he observes, "to show from what slender argument so great a scheme was fabricated and brought to light; and for the purpose of satisfying those who may desire to know distinctly the circumstances and motives which led his father to undertake this enterprise."

As this statement was formed from notes and documents found among his father's papers, it

**Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 6, 7, 8.

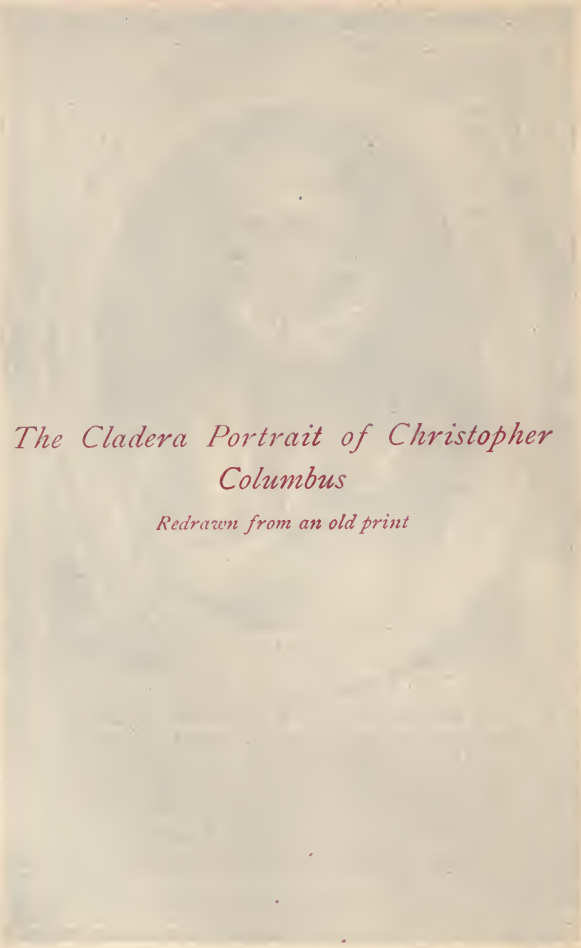
is too curious and interesting not to deserve particular mention. In this memorandum he arranged the foundation of his father's theory under three heads: 1. The nature of things. 2. The authority of learned writers. 3. The reports of navigators.

Under the first head he set down as a fundamental principle that the earth was a terraqueous sphere or globe, which might be travelled round from east to west, and that men stood foot to foot when on opposite points. The circumference from east to west, at the equator, Columbus divided, according to Ptolemy, into twenty-four hours of fifteen degrees each, making three hundred and sixty degrees. Of these he imagined, comparing the globe of Ptolemy with the earlier map of Marinus of Tyre, that fifteen hours had been known to the ancients, extending from the straits of Gibraltar, or rather from the Canary Islands, to the city of Thinæ in Asia, a place set down as at the eastern limits of the known world. The Portuguese had advanced the western frontier one hour more by the discovery of the Azores and Cape Verde Islands. There remained, then, according to the estimation of Columbus, eight hours, or one third of the circumference of the earth, unknown and unexplored. This space might, in a great measure, be filled up by the

eastern regions of Asia, which might extend so far as nearly to surround the globe, and to approach the western shores of Europe and Africa. The tract of ocean intervening between these countries, he observes, would be less than might at first be supposed, if the opinion of Alfraganus, the Arabian, were admitted, who, by diminishing the size of the degrees, gave to the earth a smaller circumference than did other cosmographers, a theory to which Columbus seems at times to have given faith. Granting these premises, it was manifest that, by pursuing a direct course from east to west, a navigator would arrive at the extremity of Asia and discover any intervening land.

Under the second head are named the authors whose writings had weight in convincing him that the intervening ocean could be but of moderate expanse and easy to be traversed. Among these he cites the opinion of Aristotle, Seneca, and Pliny, that one might pass from Cadiz to the Indies in a few days; of Strabo also, who observes that the ocean surrounds the earth, bathing on the east the shores of India; on the west, the coasts of Spain and Mauritania; so that it is easy to navigate from one to the other on the same parallel.*

* Strab., *Cos.*, lib. i., ii.



The Cladera Portrait of Christopher Columbus

Redrawn from an old print

CHRISTOVAL COLON
Descubridor de las Indias.

In corroboration of the idea that Asia, or, as he always terms it, India, stretched far to the east, so as to occupy the greater part of the unexplored space, the narratives are cited of Marco Polo and John Mandeville. These travellers had visited, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the remote parts of Asia, far beyond the regions laid down by Ptolemy; and their accounts of the extent of that continent to the eastward had a great effect in convincing Columbus that a voyage to the west, of no long duration, would bring him to its shores, or to the extensive and wealthy islands which lie adjacent. The information concerning Marco Polo is probably derived from Paulo Toscanelli, a celebrated doctor of Florence, already mentioned, with whom Columbus corresponded in 1474, and who transmitted to him a copy of a letter which he had previously written to Fernando Martinez, a learned canon of Lisbon. This letter maintains the facility of arriving at India by a western course, asserting the distance to be but four thousand miles, in a direct line from Lisbon to the province of Mangi, near Cathay, since determined to be the northern coast of China. Of this country he gives a magnificent description, drawn from the work of Marco Polo. He adds that in the route lay the islands of Antilla and Cipango, distant

from each other only two hundred and twenty-five leagues, abounding in riches and offering convenient places for ships to touch at and obtain supplies on the voyage.

Under the third head are enumerated various indications of land in the west, which had floated to the shores of the known world. It is curious to observe how, when once the mind of Columbus had become heated in the inquiry, it attracted to it every corroborating circumstance, however vague and trivial. He appears to have been particularly attentive to the gleams of information derived from veteran mariners, who had been employed in the recent voyages to the African coasts, and also from the inhabitants of lately discovered islands, placed, in a manner, on the frontier posts of geographical knowledge. All these are carefully noted down among his memorandums, to be collocated with the facts and opinions already stored up in his mind.

Such, for instance, is the circumstance related to him by Martin Vicenti, a pilot in the service of the King of Portugal: that, after sailing four hundred and fifty leagues to the west of Cape St. Vincent, he had taken from the water a piece of carved wood, which had evidently not been labored with an iron instrument. As the winds had drifted it from the

west, it might have come from some unknown land in that direction.

Pedro Correo, brother-in-law of Columbus, is likewise cited as having seen, on the island of Porto Santo, a similar piece of wood, which had drifted from the same quarter. He had heard also, from the King of Portugal, that reeds of an immense size had floated to some of those islands from the west, in the description of which Columbus thought he recognized the immense reeds said by Ptolemy to grow in India.

Information is likewise noted, given him by the inhabitants of the Azores, of trunks of huge pine-trees, of a kind that did not grow upon any of the islands, wafted to their shores by the westerly winds; but especially of the bodies of two dead men, cast upon the island of Flores, whose features differed from those of any known race of people.

To these is added the report of a mariner of the port of St. Mary, who asserted that, in the course of a voyage to Ireland, he had seen land to the west, which the ship's company took for some extreme part of Tartary. Other stories, of a similar kind, are noted, as well as rumors concerning the fancied islands of St. Brandan, and of the Seven Cities, to which, as has already been observed, Columbus gave but little faith.

Such is an abstract of the grounds on which, according to Fernando, his father proceeded from one position to another, until he came to the conclusion that there was undiscovered land in the western part of the ocean, that it was attainable, that it was fertile, and finally, that it was inhabited.

It is evident that several of the facts herein enumerated must have become known to Columbus after he had formed his opinion, and merely served to strengthen it; still, everything that throws any light upon the process of thought, which led to so great an event, is of the highest interest; and the chain of deductions here furnished, though not perhaps the most logical in its concatenation, yet, being extracted from the papers of Columbus himself, remains one of the most interesting documents in the history of the human mind.

On considering this statement attentively, it is apparent that the grand argument which induced Columbus to his enterprise was that placed under the first head, namely, that the most eastern part of Asia known to the ancients could not be separated from the Azores by more than a third of the circumference of the globe; that the intervening space must, in a great measure, be filled up by the unknown residue of Asia; and that, if the circumference

of the world was, as he believed, less than was generally supposed, the Asiatic shores could easily be attained by a moderate voyage to the west.

It is singular how much the success of this great undertaking depended upon two happy errors, the imaginary extent of Asia to the east, and the supposed smallness of the earth; both errors of the most learned and profound philosophers, but without which Columbus would hardly have ventured upon his enterprise. As to the idea of finding land by sailing directly to the west, it is at present so familiar to our minds as in some measure to diminish the merits of the first conception and the hardihood of the first attempt; but in those days, as has well been observed, the circumference of the earth was yet unknown; no one could tell whether the ocean were not of immense extent, impossible to be traversed; nor were the laws of specific gravity and of central gravitation ascertained, by which, granting the rotundity of the earth, the possibility of making the tour of it would be manifest.* The practicability, therefore, of finding land by sailing to the west was one of those mysteries of nature which are considered in-

* Malte-Brun, *Géog. Universelle*, tom. xiv. "Note sur le Découverte de l'Amérique."

credible whilst matters of mere speculation, but the simplest things imaginable when they have once been ascertained.

When Columbus had formed his theory, it became fixed in his mind with singular firmness, and influenced his entire character and conduct. He never spoke in doubt or hesitation, but with as much certainty as if his eyes had beheld the promised land. No trial nor disappointment could divert him from the steady pursuit of his object. A deep religious sentiment mingled with his meditations, and gave them at times a tinge of superstition, but it was of a sublime and lofty kind; he looked upon himself as standing in the hand of Heaven, chosen from among men for the accomplishment of its high purpose; he read, as he supposed, his contemplated discovery foretold in Holy Writ, and shadowed forth darkly in the mystic revelations of the prophets. The ends of the earth were to be brought together, and all nations and tongues and languages united under the banners of the Redeemer. This was to be the triumphant consummation of his enterprise, bringing the remote and unknown regions of the earth into communion with Christian Europe, carrying the light of the true faith into benighted and pagan lands, and gathering their countless

nations under the holy dominion of the Church.

The enthusiastic nature of his conceptions gave an elevation to his spirit and a dignity and loftiness to his whole demeanor. He conferred with sovereigns almost with a feeling of equality. His views were princely and unbounded; his proposed discovery was of empires; his conditions were proportionally magnificent; nor would he ever, even after long delays, repeated disappointments, and under the pressure of actual penury, abate what appeared to be extravagant demands for a mere possible discovery.

Those who could not conceive how an ardent and comprehensive genius could arrive, by presumptive evidence, at so firm a conviction, sought for other modes of accounting for it. When the glorious result had established the correctness of the opinion of Columbus, attempts were made to prove that he had obtained previous information of the lands which he pretended to discover. Among these was an idle tale of a tempest-tossed pilot, said to have died in his house, bequeathing him written accounts of an unknown land in the west, upon which he had been driven by adverse winds. This story, according to Fernando Columbus, had no other foundation

than one of the popular tales about the shadowy island of St. Brandan, which a Portuguese captain, returning from Guinea, fancied he had beheld beyond Madeira. It circulated for a time in idle rumor, altered and shaped to suit their purposes, by such as sought to tarnish the glory of Columbus. At length it found its way into print, and has been echoed by various historians, varying with every narration, and full of contradictions and improbabilities.*

An assertion has also been made that Columbus was preceded in his discoveries by Martin Behem, a contemporary cosmographer, who, it was said, had landed accidentally on the coast of South America, in the course of an African expedition; and that it was with the assistance of a map, or globe, projected by Behem, on which was laid down the newly discovered country, that Columbus made his voyage. This rumor originated in an absurd misconstruction of a Latin manuscript, and was unsupported by any documents; yet it has had its circulation, and has even been revived not many years since, with more zeal than discretion, but is now completely refuted and put to rest. The land visited by Behem

* See Appendix, article "Rumor Concerning the Pilot Who Died in the House of Columbus."

PART OF A TERRESTRIAL GLOBE MADE AT NUREMBERG IN 1492, BY MARTIN BEHEM.

REFERENCES.

A.—Cipanga. Has its own kings and languages. People idolaters. The richest island of the East in gold and spices.
B.—In the year 565 St. Brandan came in his ship to this island.
C.—Bergi Cathay, Kingdom of Thohat.
D.—King of Mangi.
E.—Kingdom of India, or Concha. India of Ptolemy.
F.—India—pars Indiæ extra Gangem. Ciamba.
G.—The mountains of Thebet.
H.—Port of Ciamba.
I.—Oceanus Indiæ Superioris.
J.—An island on which are gold and spices.
K.—Here are caught white falcons.

was the coast of Africa beyond the equator; the globe he projected was finished in 1492, while Columbus was absent on his first voyage; it contains no trace of the New World, and thus furnishes conclusive proof that its existence was yet unknown to Behem.*

There is a certain meddlesome spirit, which, in the garb of learned research, goes prying about the traces of history, casting down its monuments, and marring and mutilating its fairest trophies. Care should be taken to vindicate great names from such pernicious erudition. It defeats one of the most salutary purposes of history, that of furnishing examples of what human genius and laudable enterprise may accomplish. For this purpose, some pains have been taken in the preceding chapters, to trace the rise and progress of this grand idea in the mind of Columbus; to show

* See Appendix, article "Behem."

NOTE.—The segment of Behem's terrestrial globe on previous page was made at Nuremberg in the year 1492, the very year in which Columbus departed on his first voyage of discovery. Martin Behem, the inventor, was one of the most learned cosmographers of the time, and, having resided at Lisbon in the employ of the King of Portugal, he had probably seen the map of Toscanelli, and the documents submitted by Columbus to the consideration of the Portuguese government. His globe may, therefore, be presumed illustrative of the idea entertained by Columbus of the islands in the ocean near the extremity of Asia, at the time he undertook his discovery.

that it was the conception of his genius, quickened by the impulse of the age, and aided by those scattered gleams of knowledge, which fell ineffectually upon ordinary minds.

Chapter VI.

CORRESPONDENCE OF COLUMBUS WITH PAULO TOSCANELLI—PROPOSITION OF COLUMBUS TO THE PORTUGUESE COURT—DEPARTURE FROM PORTUGAL.

IT is impossible to determine the precise time when Columbus first conceived the design of seeking a western route to India. It is certain, however, that he meditated it as early as the year 1474, though as yet it lay crude and unmatured in his mind. This fact, which is of some importance, is sufficiently established by the correspondence already mentioned with the learned Toscanelli of Florence, which took place in the summer of that year. The letter of Toscanelli is in reply to one from Columbus, and applauds the design which he had expressed of making a voyage to the west. To demonstrate more clearly the facility of arriving at India in that direction, he sent him a map, projected partly according to Ptolemy, and partly according to

the descriptions of Marco Polo, the Venetian. The eastern coast of Asia was depicted in front of the western coast of Africa and Europe, with a moderate space of ocean between them, in which were placed at convenient distances Cipango, Antilla, and the other islands.* Columbus was greatly animated by the letter and chart of Toscanelli, who was considered one of the ablest cosmographers of the day. He appears to have procured the work of Marco Polo, which had been translated into various languages, and existed in manuscript in most libraries. This author gives marvellous accounts of the riches of the realms of Cathay and Mangi, or Mangu, since ascertained to be Northern and Southern China, on the coast of which, according to the map of Toscanelli, a voyager sailing directly west would be sure to arrive. He describes in unmeasured terms the power and grandeur of the sovereign of these countries, the Great Khan of Tartary, and the splendor and mag-

* This map, by which Columbus sailed on his first voyage of discovery, Las Casas (lib. i., cap. 12) says he had in his possession at the time of writing his history. It is greatly to be regretted that so interesting a document should be lost. It may yet exist among the chaotic lumber of the Spanish archives. Few documents of mere curiosity would be more precious.

nitude of his capitals of Cambalu and Quinsai, and the wonders of the island of Cipango or Zipangi, supposed to be Japan. This island he places opposite Cathay five hundred leagues in the ocean. He represents it as abounding in gold, precious stones, and other choice objects of commerce, with a monarch whose palace was roofed with plates of gold instead of lead. The narrations of this traveller were by many considered fabulous; but though full of what appear to be splendid exaggerations, they have since been found substantially correct. They are thus particularly noted, from the influence they had over the imagination of Columbus. The work of Marco Polo is a key to many parts of his history. In his applications to the various courts, he represented the countries he expected to discover as those regions of inexhaustible wealth which the Venetian had described. The territories of the Great Khan were the objects of inquiry in all his voyages; and in his cruisings among the Antilles he was continually flattering himself with the hopes of arriving at the opulent island of Cipango and the coasts of Mangi and Cathay.*

While the design of attempting the dis-

* A more particular account of Marco Polo and his writings is given in the Appendix.

covery in the west was maturing in the mind of Columbus, he made a voyage to the north of Europe. Of this we have no other memorial than the following passage, extracted by his son from one of his letters:

"In the year 1477, in February, I navigated one hundred leagues beyond Thule, the southern part of which is seventy-three degrees distant from the equator, and not sixty-three, as some pretend; neither is it situated within the line which includes the west of Ptolemy, but is much more westerly. The English, principally those of Bristol, go with their merchandise to this island, which is as large as England. When I was there, the sea was not frozen, and the tide was so great as to rise and fall twenty-six fathom." *

The island thus mentioned is generally supposed to have been Iceland, which is far to the west of the Ultima Thule of the ancients, as laid down in the map of Ptolemy.

Several more years elapsed without any decided efforts on the part of Columbus to carry his design into execution. He was too poor to fit out the armament necessary for so important an expedition. Indeed, it was an enterprise only to be undertaken in the employ of some sovereign state, which could assume dominion over the territories he might dis-

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 4.

cover, and reward him with dignities and privileges commensurate to his services. It is asserted that he at one time endeavored to engage his native country, Genoa, in the undertaking, but without success. No record remains of such an attempt, though it is generally believed, and has strong probability in its favor. His residence in Portugal placed him at hand to solicit the patronage of that power, but Alphonso, who was then on the throne, was too much engrossed in the latter part of his reign with a war with Spain, for the succession of the Princess Juana to the crown of Castile, to engage in peaceful enterprises of an expensive nature. The public mind, also, was not prepared for so perilous an undertaking. Notwithstanding the many recent voyages to the coast of Africa and the adjacent islands, and the introduction of the compass into more general use, navigation was still shackled with impediments, and the mariner rarely ventured far out of sight of land.

Discovery advanced slowly along the coasts of Africa, and the mariners feared to cruise far into the southern hemisphere, with the stars of which they were totally unacquainted. To such men, the project of a voyage directly westward, into the midst of that boundless waste, to seek some visionary land, appeared

as extravagant as it would be at the present day to launch forth in a balloon into the regions of space, in quest of some distant star.

JOHN II. OF PORTUGAL.

The time, however, was at hand that was to extend the sphere of navigation. The era was propitious to the quick advancement of knowl-

edge. The recent invention of the art of printing enabled men to communicate rapidly and extensively their ideas and discoveries. It drew forth learning from libraries and convents, and brought it familiarly to the reading-desk of the student. Volumes of information, which before had existed only in costly manuscripts, carefully treasured up, and kept out of the reach of the indigent scholar and obscure artist, were now in every hand. There was, henceforth, to be no retrogression in knowledge, nor any pause in its career. Every step in advance was immediately, and simultaneously, and widely promulgated, recorded in a thousand forms, and fixed forever. There could never again be a dark age; nations might shut their eyes to the light, and sit in wilful darkness, but they could not trample it out; it would still shine on, dispensed to happier parts of the world, by the diffusive powers of the press.

At this juncture, in 1481, a monarch ascended the throne of Portugal of different ambition from Alphonso. John II., then in the twenty-fifth year of his age, had imbibed the passion for discovery from his grand-uncle, Prince Henry, and with his reign all its activity revived. His first care was to build a fort at St. George de la Mina, on the

coast of Guinea, to protect the trade carried on in that neighborhood for gold-dust, ivory, and slaves.

The African discoveries had conferred great glory upon Portugal, but as yet they had been expensive rather than profitable. The accomplishment of the route to India, however, it was expected would repay all cost and toil, and open a source of incalculable wealth to the nation. The project of Prince Henry, which had now been tardily prosecuted for half a century, had excited a curiosity about the remote parts of Asia, and revived all the accounts, true and fabulous, of travellers.

Beside the work of Marco Polo, already mentioned, there was the narrative of Rabbi Benjamin ben Jonah, of Tudela, a Spanish Jew who set out from Saragossa in 1173, to visit the scattered remnants of the Hebrew tribes. Wandering with unwearied zeal on this pious errand, over most parts of the known world, he penetrated China, and passed thence to the southern islands of Asia.* There were also the narratives of Carpini and Asce-

* Bergeron, *Voyages en Asie*, tom. i. The work of Benjamin of Tudela, originally written in Hebrew, was so much in repute that the translation went through sixteen editions. Andres, *Hist. B. Let.*, ii., cap. 6.

lin, two friars, despatched, the one in 1246, the other in 1247, by Pope Innocent IV., as apostolic ambassadors, for the purpose of converting the Grand Khan of Tartary; and the Journal of William Rubruquis (or Ruysbroek), a celebrated Cordelier, sent on a similar errand in 1253, by Louis IX. of France, then on its unfortunate crusade into Palestine. These pious but chimerical missions had proved abortive; but the narratives of them being revived in the fifteenth century, served to inflame the public curiosity respecting the remote parts of Asia.

In these narratives we first find mention made of the renowned Prester John, a Christian King, said to hold sway in a remote part of the East, who was long an object of curiosity and research, but whose kingdom seemed to shift its situation in the tale of every traveller, and to vanish from the search as effectually as the unsubstantial island of St. Brandan. All the speculations concerning this potentate and his Oriental realm were again put in circulation. It was fancied that traces of his empire were discovered in the interior of Africa, to the east of Benin, where there was a powerful prince, who used a cross among the insignia of royalty. John II. partook largely of the popular excitement produced by these

narrations. In the early part of his reign he actually sent missions in quest of Prester John, to visit whose dominions became the romantic desire of many a religious enthusiast.* The magnificent idea he had formed of the remote parts of the East made him extremely anxious that the splendid project of Prince Henry should be realized, and the Portuguese flag penetrate to the Indian seas. Impatient of the slowness with which his discoveries advanced along the coast of Africa, and of the impediments which every cape and promontory presented to nautical enterprise, he called in the aid of science to devise some means by which greater scope and certainty might be given to navigation. His two physicians, Roderigo and Joseph, the latter a Jew, the most able astronomers and cosmographers of his kingdom, together with the celebrated Martin Behem, entered into a learned consultation on the subject. The result of their conferences and labors was the application of the astrolabe to navigation, enabling the seaman, by the altitude of the sun, to ascertain his distance from the equator.† This instrument has since been improved and

* See Appendix, article "Prester John."

† Barros, decad. i., lib., iv., cap. 2. Maffei, lib. vi., pp. 6 and 7.

modified into the modern quadrant, of which, even at its first introduction, it possessed all the essential advantages.

It is impossible to describe the effect produced upon navigation by this invention. It cast it loose at once from its long bondage to the land, and set it free to rove the deep. The mariner now, instead of coasting the shores like the ancient navigators, and, if driven from the land, groping his way back in doubt and apprehension by the uncertain guidance of the stars, might adventure boldly into unknown seas, confident of being able to trace his course by means of the compass and the astrolabe.

It was shortly after this event, which had prepared guides for discovery across the trackless ocean, that Columbus made the first attempt, of which we have any clear and indisputable record, to procure royal patronage for his enterprise. The court of Portugal had shown extraordinary liberality in rewarding nautical discovery. Most of those who had succeeded in her service had been appointed to the government of the islands and countries they had discovered, although many of them were foreigners by birth. Encouraged by this liberality, and by the anxiety evinced by King John II. to accomplish a passage by sea to

India, Columbus obtained an audience of that monarch, and proposed, in case the King would furnish him with ships and men, to undertake a shorter and more direct route than that along the coast of Africa. His plan was to strike directly to the west across the Atlantic. He then unfolded his hypothesis with respect to the extent of Asia, describing also the immense riches of the island of Cipango, the first land at which he expected to arrive. Of this audience we have two accounts, written in somewhat of an opposite spirit; one by his son Fernando, the other by João de Barros, the Portuguese historiographer. It is curious to notice the different views taken of the same transaction by the enthusiastic son, and by the cool, perhaps prejudiced, historian.

The King, according to Fernando, listened to his father with great attention, but was discouraged from engaging in any new scheme of the kind, by the cost and trouble already sustained in exploring the route by the African coast, which as yet remained unaccomplished. His father, however, supported his proposition by such excellent reasons, that the King was induced to give his consent. The only difficulty that remained was the terms; for Columbus, being a man of lofty and noble sentiments, demanded high and honorable

titles and rewards, to the end, says Fernando, that he might leave behind him a name and family worthy of his deeds and merits.*

Barros, on the other hand, attributes the seeming acquiescence of the King, merely to the importunities of Columbus. He considered him, says the historian, a vainglorious man, fond of displaying his abilities, and given to fantastic fancies, such as that respecting the island of Cipango.† But, in fact, this idea of Columbus being vain, was taken up by the Portuguese writers in after years; and as to the island of Cipango, it was far from being considered chimerical by the King, who, as has been shown by his mission in search of Prester John, was a ready believer in these travellers' tales concerning the East. The reasoning of Columbus must have produced an effect on the mind of the monarch, since it is certain that he referred the proposition to a learned junto, charged with all matters relating to maritime discovery.

This junto was composed of two able cosmographers, masters Roderigo and Joseph, and the King's confessor, Diego Ortiz de Cazadilla, Bishop of Ceuta, a man greatly reputed for his learning, a Castilian by birth, and

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 10.

† Barros, *Asia*, decad. i., lib. iii., cap. 2.

generally called Cazadilla, from the name of his native place. This scientific body treated the project as extravagant and visionary.

Still the King does not appear to have been satisfied. According to his historian Vasconcellos, * he convoked his council, composed of prelates and persons of the greatest learning in the kingdom, and asked their advice, whether to adopt this new route of discovery, or to pursue that which they had already opened.

It may not be deemed superfluous to notice briefly the discussion of the council on this great question. Vasconcellos reports a speech of the Bishop of Ceuta, in which he not only objected to the proposed enterprise, as destitute of reason, but even discountenanced any further prosecution of the African discoveries.

"They tended," he said, "to distract the attention, drain the resources, and divide the power of the nation, already too much weakened by recent war and pestilence. While their forces were thus scattered abroad on remote and unprofitable expeditions, they exposed themselves to attack from their active enemy the King of Castile. The greatness of monarchs," he continued, "did not arise so much from the extent of their dominions, as from the wisdom and ability with which they governed. In the Portu-

* Vasconcellos, *Vida del Rey Don Juan II.*, lib. iv.

guese nation it would be madness to launch into enterprises without first considering them in connection with its means. The King had already sufficient undertakings in hand of certain advantage, without engaging in others of a wild, chimerical nature. If he wished employment for the active valor of the nation, the war in which he was engaged against the Moors of Barbary was sufficient, wherein his triumphs were of solid advantage, tending to cripple and enfeeble those neighboring foes who had proved themselves so dangerous when possessed of power."

This cool and cautious speech of the Bishop of Ceuta, directed against enterprises which were the glory of the Portuguese, touched the national pride of Don Pedro de Meneses, Count of Villa Real, and drew from him a lofty and patriotic reply. It has been said by an historian, that this reply was in support of the proposition of Columbus ; but that does not clearly appear. He may have treated the proposal with respect, but his eloquence was employed for those enterprises in which the Portuguese were already engaged.

"Portugal," he observed, "was not in its infancy, nor were its princes so poor as to lack means to engage in discoveries. Even granting that those proposed by Columbus were conjectural, why should they abandon those commenced by their late Prince Henry, on such solid foundations, and prosecuted with such happy prospects? Crowns," he observed, "enriched themselves by commerce, fortified them-

selves by alliance, and acquired empires by conquest. The views of a nation could not always be the same; they extended with its opulence and prosperity. Portugal was at peace with all the princes of Europe. It had nothing to fear from engaging in an extensive enterprise. It would be the greatest glory for Portuguese valor to penetrate into the secrets and horrors of the ocean sea, so formidable to the other nations of the world. Thus occupied, it would escape the idleness engendered in a long interval of peace—idleness, that source of vice, that silent file, which little by little, wore away the strength and valor of a nation. It was an affront," he added, "to the Portuguese name to menace it with imaginary perils, when it had proved itself so intrepid in encountering those which were most certain and tremendous. Great souls were formed for great enterprises. He wondered much, that a prelate, so religious as the Bishop of Ceuta, should oppose this undertaking; the ultimate object of which was to augment the Catholic faith, and spread it from pole to pole; reflecting glory on the Portuguese nation, and yielding empire and lasting fame to its princes." He concluded by declaring that "although a soldier, he dared to prognosticate, with a voice and spirit as if from Heaven, to whatever prince should achieve this enterprise, more happy success and durable renown, than had ever been obtained by sovereign the most valorous and fortunate." *

The warm and generous eloquence of the Count overpowered the cold-spirited reason-

* Vasconcellos, lib. iv. La Clede, *Hist. Portugal*, lib. xiii., tom. iii.

ings of the Bishop as far as the project of circumnavigating Africa was concerned, which was prosecuted with new ardor and triumphant success: the proposition of Columbus, however, was generally condemned by the council.

Seeing that King John still manifested an inclination for the enterprise, it was suggested to him by the Bishop of Ceuta, that Columbus might be kept in suspense while a vessel secretly despatched in the direction he should point out might ascertain whether there was any foundation for his theory. By this means all its advantages might be secured, without committing the dignity of the Crown by formal negotiations about what might prove a mere chimera. King John, in an evil hour, had the weakness to permit a stratagem so inconsistent with his usual justice and magnanimity. Columbus was required to furnish for the consideration of the council a detailed plan of his proposed voyage, with the charts and documents according to which he intended to shape his course. These being procured, a caravel was despatched with the ostensible design of carrying provisions to the Cape Verde Islands; but with private instructions to pursue the designated route. Departing from those islands the caravel stood westward for several

days, until the weather became stormy ; when the pilots, seeing nothing but an immeasurable waste of wild tumbling waves still extending before them, lost all courage and put back, ridiculing the project of Columbus as extravagant and irrational.*

This unworthy attempt to defraud him of his enterprise roused the indignation of Columbus, and he declined all offers of King John to renew the negotiation. The death of his wife, which had occurred some time previously, had dissolved the domestic tie which bound him to Portugal ; he determined, therefore, to abandon a country where he had been treated with so little faith, and to look elsewhere for patronage. Before his departure, he engaged his brother Bartholomew to carry proposals to the King of England, though he does not appear to have entertained great hope from that quarter, England by no means possessing at that time the spirit of nautical enterprise which has since distinguished her. The great reliance of Columbus was on his own personal exertions.

It was towards the end of 1484 that he left Lisbon, taking with him his son Diego. His departure had to be conducted with secrecy,

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 8. Herrera, decad. i., lib. i., cap. 7.

lest, as some assert, it should be prevented by King John; but lest, as others surmise, it should be prevented by his creditors.* Like many other great projectors, while engaged upon schemes of vast benefit to mankind, he had suffered his own affairs to go to ruin, and was reduced to struggle hard with poverty; nor is it one of the least interesting circumstances in his eventful life that he had, in a manner, to beg his way from court to court, to offer to princes the discovery of a world.

* This surmise is founded on a letter from King John to Columbus, written some years afterwards, inviting him to return to Portugal, and insuring him against arrest on account of any process, civil or criminal, which might be pending against him. See Navarrete, *Colec.*, tom. ii., dec. 3.

Book II.

Chapter II.

PROCEEDINGS OF COLUMBUS AFTER LEAVING PORTUGAL—HIS APPLICATIONS IN SPAIN—CHARACTERS OF FERDINAND AND ISABELLA.

[1485.]

THE immediate movements of Columbus on leaving Portugal are involved in uncertainty. It is said that about this time he made a proposition of his enterprise, in person, as he had formerly done by letter, to the government of Genoa. The Republic, however, was in a languishing decline, and embarrassed by a foreign war. Caffa, her great deposit in the Crimea, had fallen into the hands of the Turks, and her flag was on the point of being driven from the Archipelago. Her spirit was broken with her fortunes; for with nations, as with individuals, enterprise is the child of prosperity, and is apt to languish in evil days, when there is most need of its

exertion. Thus Genoa, disheartened by her reverses, shut her ears to the proposition of Columbus, which might have elevated her to tenfold splendor, and perpetuated within her grasp the golden wand of commerce. While at Genoa, Columbus is said to have made arrangements out of his scanty means for the comfort of his aged father. It is also affirmed that about this time he carried his proposal to Venice, where it was declined on account of the critical state of national affairs. This, however, is merely traditional, and unsupported by documentary evidence. The first firm and indisputable trace we have of Columbus after leaving Portugal is in the south of Spain, in 1485, where we find him seeking his fortune among the Spanish nobles, several of whom had vast possessions, and exercised almost independent sovereignty in their domains.

Foremost among these were the Dukes of Medina Sidonia and Medina Celi, who had estates like principalities lying along the seacoast, with ports and shipping and hosts of retainers at their command. They served the Crown in its Moorish wars more as allied princes than as vassals, bringing armies into the field by themselves, or by captains of their own appointment. Their domestic establishments were on almost a regal scale; their

palaces were filled with persons of merit, and young cavaliers of noble birth, to be reared under their auspices, in the exercise of arts and arms.

Columbus had many interviews with the Duke of Medina Sidonia, who was tempted for a time by the splendid prospects held out; but their very splendor threw a coloring of improbability over the enterprise, and he finally rejected it as the dream of an Italian visionary.

The Duke of Medina Celi was likewise favorable at the outset. He entertained Columbus for some time in his house, and was actually on the point of granting him three or four caravels which lay ready for sea in his harbor of Port St. Mary, opposite Cadiz, when he suddenly changed his mind, deterred by the consideration that the enterprise, if successful, would involve discoveries too important to be grasped by any but a sovereign power, and that the Spanish government might be displeased at his undertaking it on his own account. Finding, however, that Columbus intended to make his next application to the King of France, and loth that an enterprise of such importance should be lost to Spain, the Duke wrote to Queen Isabella recommending it strongly to her attention. The Queen made a favorable reply, and requested that Columbus

might be sent to her. He accordingly set out for the Spanish court, then at Cordova, bearing a letter to the Queen from the Duke, soliciting that, in case the expedition should be carried into effect, he might have a share in it, and the fitting out of the armament from his port of St. Mary, as a recompense for having waived the enterprise in favor of the Crown.*

The time when Columbus thus sought his fortunes at the court of Spain coincided with one of the most brilliant periods of the Spanish monarchy. The union of the kingdoms of Arragon and Castile, by the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella, had consolidated the Christian power in the Peninsula, and put an end to those internal feuds, which had so long distracted the country, and insured the dominations of the Moslems. The whole force of united

* Letter of the Duke of Medina Celi to the Grand Cardinal. Navarrete, *Colec.*, vol. ii., p. 20.

N. B. In the previous editions of this work, the first trace we have of Columbus in Spain is at the gate of the Convent of La Rabida, in Andalusia. Subsequent investigations have induced me to conform to the opinion of the indefatigable and accurate Navarrete, given in his third volume of documents, that the first trace of Columbus in Spain was his application to the Dukes of Medina Sidonia and Medina Celi, and that his visit to the convent of La Rabida was some few years subsequent.

Spain was now exerted in the chivalrous enterprise of the Moorish conquest. The Moors, who had once spread over the whole country like an inundation, were now pent up within the mountain boundaries of the kingdom of Granada. The victorious armies of Ferdinand and Isabella were continually advancing, and pressing this fierce people within narrower limits. Under these sovereigns, the various petty kingdoms of Spain began to feel and act as one nation, and to rise to eminence in arts as well as arms. Ferdinand and Isabella, it has been remarked, lived together not like man and wife, whose estates are common, under the orders of the husband, but like two monarchs strictly allied.* They had separate claims to sovereignty, in virtue of their respective kingdoms; they had separate councils, and were often distant from each other in different parts of their empire, each exercising the royal authority. Yet they were so happily united by common views, common interests, and a great deference for each other, that this double administration never prevented a unity of purpose and of action. All acts of sovereignty were executed in both their names; all public writings were subscribed with both their signatures; their likenesses were stamped together

* Voltaire, *Essai sur les Mœurs*, etc.

on the public coins and the royal seal displayed the united arms of Castile and Arragon.

Ferdinand was of the middle stature, well

FERDINAND, KING OF SPAIN.

proportioned, and hardy and active from athletic exercise. His carriage was free, erect, and

majestic. He had a clear, serene forehead, which appeared more lofty from his head being partly bald. His eyebrows were large and parted, and, like his hair, of a bright chestnut; his eyes were clear and animated; his complexion was somewhat ruddy and scorched by the toils of war; his mouth moderate, well formed, and gracious in its expression; his teeth white, though small and irregular; his voice sharp; his speech quick and fluent. His genius was clear and comprehensive; his judgment grave and certain. He was simple in dress and diet, equable in his temper, devout in his religion, and so indefatigable in business that it was said he seemed to repose himself by working. He was a great observer and judge of men, and unparalleled in the science of the cabinet. Such is the picture given of him by the Spanish historians of his time. It has been added, however, that he had more of bigotry than religion; that his ambition was craving rather than magnanimous; that he made war less like a paladin than a prince, less for glory than for mere dominion; and that his policy was cold, selfish, and artful. He was called the wise and prudent in Spain; in Italy, the pious; in France and England, the ambitious and perfidious.* He certainly was one of the

* Voltaire, *Essai sur les Mœurs*, ch. 14.

most subtle statesmen, but one of the most thorough egotists, that ever sat upon a throne.

While giving his picture, it may not be deemed impertinent to sketch the fortunes of a monarch whose policy had such an effect upon the history of Columbus and the destinies of the New World. Success attended all his measures. Though a younger son, he had ascended the throne of Arragon by inheritance; Castile he obtained by marriage; Granada and Naples by conquest; and he seized upon Navarre as appertaining to any one who could take possession of it, when Pope Julius II. excommunicated its sovereigns, Juan and Catalina, and gave their throne to the first occupant.* He sent his forces into Africa, and subjugated, or reduced to vassalage, Tunis, Tripoli, Algiers, and most of the Barbary powers. A new world was also given to him, without cost, by the discoveries of Columbus, for the expense of the enterprise was borne exclusively by his consort Isabella. He had three objects at heart from the commencement of his reign, which he pursued with bigoted and persecuting zeal: the conquest of the Moors, the expulsion of the Jews, and the

* Pedro Salazar di Mendoza, *Monarq. de Esp.*, lib. iii., cap. 5. (Madrid, 1770, tom. i., p. 402.) Gonzalo de Illescas, *Hist. Pontif.*, lib. vi., cap. 23, §3.

establishment of the Inquisition in his dominions. He accomplished them all, and was rewarded by Pope Innocent VIII. with the

ISABELLA, QUEEN OF SPAIN.

appellation of Most Catholic Majesty—a title which his successors have tenaciously retained.

Contemporary writers have been enthusiastic in their descriptions of Isabella, but time has sanctioned their eulogies. She is one of the purest and most beautiful characters in the pages of history. She was well formed, of the middle size, with great dignity and gracefulness of deportment, and a mingled gravity and sweetness of demeanor. Her complexion was fair; her hair auburn, inclining to red; her eyes were of a clear blue, with a benign expression, and there was a singular modesty in her countenance, gracing, as it did a wonderful firmness of purpose, and earnestness of spirit. Though strongly attached to her husband, and studious of his fame, yet she always maintained her distinct rights as an allied prince. She exceeded him in beauty, in personal dignity, in acuteness of genius, and in grandeur of soul.* Combining the active and resolute qualities of man with the softer charities of woman, she mingled in the warlike councils of her husband, engaged personally in his enterprises,† and in some instances surpassed him in the firmness and

* Garibay, *Hist. de España*, tom. ii., lib. xviii., cap. 1.

† Several suits of armor *cap-a-pié*, worn by Isabella, and still preserved in the royal arsenal at Madrid, show that she was exposed to personal danger in her campaigns.

intrepidity of her measures; while, being inspired with a truer idea of glory, she infused a more lofty and generous temper into his subtle and calculating policy.

It is in the civil history of their reign, however, that the character of Isabella shines most illustrious. Her fostering and maternal care was continually directed to reform the laws, and heal the ills engendered by a long course of internal wars. She loved her people, and while diligently seeking their good, she mitigated as much as possible the harsh measures of her husband, directed to the same end, but inflamed by a mistaken zeal. Thus, though almost bigoted in her piety, and perhaps too much under the influence of ghostly advisers, still she was hostile to every measure calculated to advance religion at the expense of humanity. She strenuously opposed the expulsion of the Jews and the establishment of the Inquisition, though, unfortunately for Spain, her repugnance was slowly vanquished by her confessors. She was always an advocate for clemency to the Moors, although she was the soul of the war against Granada. She considered that war essential to protect the Christian faith, and to relieve her subjects from fierce and formidable enemies. While all her public thoughts and acts were princely

and august, her private habits were simple, frugal, and unostentatious. In the intervals of state business she assembled round her the ablest men in literature and science, and directed herself by their counsels in promoting letters and arts. Through her patronage Salamanca rose to that height which it assumed among the learned institutions of the age. She promoted the distribution of honors and rewards for the promulgation of knowledge; she fostered the art of printing, recently invented, and encouraged the establishment of presses in every part of the kingdom; books were admitted free of all duty, and more, we are told, were printed in Spain, at that early period of the art, than in the present literary age.*

It is wonderful how much the destinies of countries depend at times upon the virtues of individuals, and how it is given to great spirits, by combining, exciting, and directing the latent powers of a nation, to stamp it, as it were, with their own greatness. Such beings realize the idea of guardian angels appointed by Heaven to watch over the destinies of empires. Such had been Prince Henry for the kingdom of Portugal; and such was now for Spain the illustrious Isabella.

* *Elogio de la Reina Catholica*, por Diego Clemencin. Madrid, 1821.

Chapter II.

COLUMBUS AT THE COURT OF SPAIN.

WHEN Columbus arrived at Cordova he was given in charge to Alonzo de Quintanilla, comptroller of the treasury of Castile, but was disappointed in his expectation of receiving immediate audience from the Queen. He found the city all in the bustle of military preparation. It was a critical juncture of the war. The rival kings of Granada, Muley Boabdil, the uncle, and Mohammed Boabdil, the nephew, had just formed a coalition, and their league called for prompt and vigorous measures.

All the chivalry of Spain had been summoned to the field; the streets of Cordova echoed to the tramp of steel and sound of trumpet, as day by day the nobles arrived with their retainers, vieing with each other in the number of their troops and the splendor of their

appointments. The court was like a military camp; the King and Queen were surrounded by the flower of Spanish chivalry; by those veteran cavaliers who had distinguished themselves in so many hardy conflicts with the Moors; and by the prelates and friars who mingled in martial council, and took deep interest and agency in this war of the Faith.

This was an unpropitious moment to urge a suit like that of Columbus. In fact, the sovereigns had not a moment of leisure throughout this eventful year. Early in the spring the King marched off to lay siege to the Moorish city of Loxa; and though the Queen remained at Cordova, she was continually employed in forwarding troops and supplies to the army, and, at the same time, attending to the multiplied exigencies of civil government. On the 12th of June she repaired to the camp, then engaged in the siege of Moclin, and both sovereigns remained for some time in the Vega of Granada, prosecuting the war with unremitting vigor. They had barely returned to Cordova to celebrate their victories by public rejoicings, when they were obliged to set out for Galicia, to suppress a rebellion of the Count of Lemos. Thence they repaired to Salamanca for the winter.

During the summer and autumn of this year

Columbus remained at Cordova, a guest in the house of Alonzo de Quintanilla, who proved a warm advocate of his theory. Through his means he became acquainted with Antonio Geraldini, the pope's nuncio, and his brother, Alexander Geraldini, preceptor to the younger children of Ferdinand and Isabella; both valuable friends about court. Wherever he obtained a candid hearing from intelligent auditors, the dignity of his manners, his earnest sincerity, the elevation of his views, and the practical shrewdness of his demonstrations, commanded respect even where they failed to produce conviction.

While thus lingering in idle suspense in Cordova he became attached to a lady of the city, Beatrix Enriquez by name, of a noble family, though in reduced circumstances. Their connection was not sanctioned by marriage; yet he cherished sentiments of respect and tenderness for her to his dying day. She was the mother of his second son, Fernando, born in the following year (1487), whom he always treated on terms of perfect equality with his legitimate son, Diego, and who, after his death, became his historian.

In the winter Columbus followed the court to Salamanca. Here his zealous friend, Alonzo de Quintanilla, exerted his influence to obtain

for him the countenance of the celebrated Pedro Gonzalez de Mendoza, Archbishop of Toledo and Grand Cardinal of Spain. This was the most important personage about the court; and was facetiously called by Peter Martyr, the "third king of Spain." The King and Queen had him always by their side in peace and war. He accompanied them in their campaigns, and they never took any measure of consequence without consulting him. He was a man of sound judgment and quick intellect, eloquent in conversation, and able in the despatch of business. His appearance was lofty and venerable; he was simple yet curiously nice in his apparel, and of gracious and gentle deportment. Though an elegant scholar, yet, like many learned men of his day, he was but little skilled in cosmography. When the theory of Columbus was first mentioned to him, it struck him as involving heterodox opinions, incompatible with the form of the earth as described in the Sacred Scriptures. Further explanations had their force with a man of his quick apprehension and sound sense. He perceived that at any rate there could be nothing irreligious in attempting to extend the bounds of human knowledge, and to ascertain the works of creation: his scruples once removed, he permitted

Columbus to be introduced to him, and gave him a courteous reception. The latter knew the importance of his auditor, and that a con-

FROM "VIAGE DE ESPAGNA," BY ANTONIO PONZ—MADRID, 1788.

ference with the Grand Cardinal was almost equivalent to a communication with the throne ;

he exerted himself to the utmost, therefore, to explain and demonstrate his proposition. The clear-headed Cardinal listened with profound attention. He was pleased with the noble and earnest manner of Columbus, which showed him to be no common schemer; he felt the grandeur and, at the same time, the simplicity of his theory, and the force of many of the arguments by which it was supported. He determined that it was a matter highly worthy of the consideration of the sovereigns, and through his representations Columbus at length obtained admission to the royal presence.*

We have but scanty particulars of this audience, nor can we ascertain whether Queen Isabella was present on the occasion; the contrary seems to be most probably the case. Columbus appeared in the royal presence with modesty, yet self-possession, neither dazzled nor daunted by the splendor of the court or the awful majesty of the throne. He unfolded his plan with eloquence and zeal, for he felt himself, as he afterwards declared, kindled as with a fire from on high, and considered himself the agent chosen by Heaven to accomplish its grand designs.†

* Oviedo, lib. ii., cap. 4. Salazar, *Cron. G. Cardinal*, lib. i., cap. 62.

† Letter to the sovereigns in 1501.

Ferdinand was too keen a judge of men not to appreciate the character of Columbus. He perceived that, however soaring might be his imagination, and vast and visionary his views, his scheme had scientific and practical foundation. His ambition was excited by the possibility of discoveries far more important than those which had shed such glory upon Portugal; and perhaps it was not the least recommendation of the enterprise to this subtle and grasping monarch, that, if successful, it would enable him to forestall that rival nation in the fruits of their long and arduous struggle, and by opening a direct course to India across the ocean, to bear off from them the monopoly of Oriental commerce.

Still, as usual, Ferdinand was cool and wary, and would not trust his own judgment in a matter that involved so many principles of science. He determined to take the opinion of the most learned men in the kingdom, and to be guided by their decision. Fernando de Talavera, prior of the monastery of Prado and confessor of the Queen, one of the most erudite men of Spain, and high in the royal confidence, was commanded to assemble the most learned astronomers and cosmographers for the purpose of holding a conference with Columbus, and examining him as to the grounds on which

he founded his proposition. After they had informed themselves fully on the subject, they were to consult together and make a report to the sovereign of their collective opinion.*

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 2.

Chapter III.

COLUMBUS BEFORE THE COUNCIL AT SALAMANCA.

[1486.]

THE interesting conference relative to the proposition of Columbus took place in Salamanca, the great seat of learning in Spain. It was held in the Dominican convent of St. Stephen, in which he was lodged and entertained with great hospitality during the course of the examination.*

Religion and science were at that time, and more especially in that country, closely associated. The treasures of learning were immured in monasteries, and the professors' chairs were exclusively filled from the cloister. The domination of the clergy extended over the state as well as the Church, and posts of honor and influence at court, with the exception of hereditary nobles, were almost entirely

* *Hist. de Chiapa*, por Remesal, lib. ii., cap. 27.

confined to ecclesiastics. It was even common to find cardinals and bishops in helm and corselet at the head of armies; for the crozier had been occasionally thrown by for the lance, during the holy war against the Moors. The era was distinguished for the revival of learning, but still more for the prevalence of religious zeal, and Spain surpassed all other countries in Christendom in the fervor of her devotion. The Inquisition had just been established in that kingdom, and every opinion that savored of heresy rendered its owner liable to odium and persecution.

Such was the period when a council of clerical sages was convened in the collegiate convent of St. Stephen, to investigate the new theory of Columbus. It was composed of professors of astronomy, geography, mathematics, and other branches of science, together with various dignitaries of the Church and learned friars. Before this erudite assembly Columbus presented himself, to propound and defend his conclusions. He had been scoffed at as a visionary by the vulgar and the ignorant; but he was convinced that he only required a body of enlightened men to listen dispassionately to his reasonings, to insure triumphant conviction.

The greater part of this learned junto, it is very probable, came prepossessed against him,

as men in place and dignity are apt to be against poor applicants. There is always a proneness to consider a man under examination as a kind of delinquent, or impostor, whose faults and errors are to be detected and exposed. Columbus, too, appeared in a most unfavorable light before a scholastic body: an obscure navigator, a member of no learned institution, destitute of all the trappings and circumstances which sometimes give oracular authority to dulness, and depending upon the mere force of natural genius. Some of the junto entertained the popular notion that he was an adventurer, or at best a visionary; and others had that morbid impatience of any innovation upon established doctrine, which is apt to grow upon dull and pedantic men in cloistered life.

What a striking spectacle must the hall of the old convent have presented at this memorable conference! A simple mariner, standing forth in the midst of an imposing array of professors, friars, and dignitaries of the Church; maintaining his theory with natural eloquence, and, as it were, pleading the cause of the New World. We are told that when he began to state the grounds of his belief, the friars of St. Stephen alone paid attention to him*; that

* Remesal, *Hist. de Chiapa*, lib. xi., cap. 7.

convent being more learned in the sciences than the rest of the University. The others appear to have entrenched themselves behind one dogged position : that, after so many profound philosophers and cosmographers had been studying the form of the world, and so many able navigators had been sailing about it for several thousand years, it was great presumption in an ordinary man to suppose that there remained such a vast discovery for him to make.

Several of the objections proposed by this learned body have been handed down to us, and have provoked many a sneer at the expense of the University of Salamanca ; but they are proofs, not so much of the peculiar deficiency of that institution, as of the imperfect state of science at the time, and the manner in which knowledge, though rapidly extending, was still impeded in its progress by monastic bigotry. All subjects were still contemplated through the obscure medium of those ages when the lights of antiquity were trampled out and faith was left to fill the place of inquiry. Bewildered in a maze of religious controversy, mankind had retraced their steps, and receded from the boundary line of ancient knowledge. Thus, at the very threshold of the discussion, instead of geographical objec-

tions, Columbus was assailed with citations from the Bible and Testament: the book of Genesis, the psalms of David, the prophets, the epistles, and the gospels. To these were added the expositions of various saints and reverend commentators, St. Chrysostom and St. Augustine, St. Jerome and St. Gregory, St. Basil and St. Ambrose, and Lactantius Firmianus, a redoubted champion of the faith. Doctrinal points were mixed up with philosophical discussions, and a mathematical demonstration was allowed no weight, if it appeared to clash with a text of Scripture, or a commentary of one of the fathers. Thus the possibility of antipodes, in the southern hemisphere, an opinion so generally maintained by the wisest of the ancients, as to be pronounced by Pliny the great contest between the learned and the ignorant, became a stumbling-block with some of the sages of Salamanca. Several of them stoutly contradicted this fundamental position of Columbus, supporting themselves by quotations from Lactantius and St. Augustine, who were considered in those days as almost evangelical authority. But, though these writers were men of consummate erudition, and two of the greatest luminaries of what has been called the golden age of ecclesiastical learning, yet their writings were

calculated to perpetuate darkness in respect to the sciences.

The passage cited from Lactantius to confute Columbus is in a strain of gross ridicule, unworthy of so grave a theologian.

"Is there any one so foolish," he asks, "as to believe that there are antipodes with their feet opposite to ours; people who walk with their heels upward and their heads hanging down? That there is a part of the world in which all things are topsy-turvy: where the trees grow with their branches downward, and where it rains, hails, and snows upward? The idea of the roundness of the earth," he adds, "was the cause of inventing this fable of the antipodes, with their heels in the air; for these philosophers, having once erred, go on in their absurdities, defending one with another."

Objections of a graver nature were advanced on the authority of St. Augustine. He pronounces the doctrine of antipodes to be incompatible with the historical foundations of our faith; since, to assert that there were inhabited lands on the opposite side of the globe, would be to maintain that there were nations not descended from Adam, it being impossible for them to have passed the intervening ocean. This would be, therefore, to discredit the Bible, which expressly declares that all men are descended from one common parent.

Such were the unlooked-for prejudices which Columbus had to encounter at the very outset of this conference, and which certainly relish more of the convent than the university. To his simplest proposition, the spherical form of the earth, were opposed figurative texts of Scripture. They observed that in the Psalms, the heavens are said to be extended like a hide,* that is, according to commentators, the curtain or covering of a tent, which among the ancient pastoral nations was formed of the hides of animals; and that St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, compares the heavens to a tabernacle, or tent, extended over the earth, which they thence inferred must be flat.

Columbus, who was a devoutly religious man, found that he was in danger of being convicted not merely of error but of heterodoxy. Others more versed in science admitted the globular form of the earth, and the possibility of an opposite and habitable hemisphere; but they brought up the chimera of the ancients, and maintained that it would be impossible to arrive there, in consequence of the insupportable heat of the torrid zone. Even granting this could be passed, they observed that the circumference of the earth

**Extendens cælum sicut pellem.*—Psal. ciii. In the English translation it is Psal. civ., ver. 2.

must be so great as to require at least three years to the voyage, and those who should undertake it must perish of hunger and thirst, from the impossibility of carrying provisions for so long a period. He was told, on the authority of Epicurus, that admitting the earth to be spherical, it was only inhabitable in the northern hemisphere, and in that section only was canopied by the heavens; that the opposite half was a chaos, a gulf, or a mere waste of water. Not the least absurd objection advanced was, that should a ship even succeed in reaching, in this way, the extremity of India, she could never get back again; for the rotundity of the globe would present a kind of mountain, up which it would be impossible for her to sail with the most favorable wind.*

Such are specimens of the errors and prejudices, the mingled ignorance and erudition, and the pedantic bigotry with which Columbus had to contend throughout the examination of his theory. Can we wonder at the difficulties and delays which he experienced at courts, when such vague and crude notions were entertained by the learned men of a university? We must not suppose, however, because the objections here cited are all which remain on record, that they are all which were advanced;

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. II.

these only have been perpetuated on account of their superior absurdity. They were probably advanced by but few, and those persons immersed in theological studies, in cloistered retirement, where the erroneous opinions derived from books had little opportunity of being corrected by the experience of the day.

There were no doubt objections advanced more cogent in their nature, and more worthy of that distinguished university. It is but justice to add also, that the replies of Columbus had great weight with many of his learned examiners. In answer to the Scriptural objections, he submitted that the inspired writers were not speaking technically as cosmographers, but figuratively, in language addressed to all comprehensions. The commentaries of the fathers he treated with deference as pious homilies, but not as philosophical propositions which it was necessary either to admit or refute. The objections drawn from ancient philosophers he met boldly and ably upon equal terms; for he was deeply studied on all points of cosmography. He showed that the most illustrious of those sages believed both hemispheres to be inhabitable, though they imagined that the torrid zone precluded communication; and he obviated conclusively that difficulty; for he had voyaged to St. George la Mina in Guinea, al-

most under the equinoctial line, and had found that region not merely traversable, but abounding in population, in fruits and pasturage.

When Columbus took his stand before this learned body he had appeared the plain and simple navigator; somewhat daunted, perhaps, by the greatness of his task and the august nature of his auditory. But he had a degree of religious feeling which gave him a confidence in the execution of what he conceived his great errand, and he was of an ardent temperament that became heated in action by its own generous fires. Las Casas and others of his contemporaries have spoken of his commanding person, his elevated demeanor, his air of authority, his kindling eye, and the persuasive intonations of his voice. How must they have given majesty and force to his words, as, casting aside his maps and charts, and discarding for a time his practical and scientific lore, his visionary spirit took fire at the doctrinal objections of his opponents, and he met them upon their own ground, pouring forth those magnificent texts of Scripture, and those mysterious predictions of the prophets, which, in his enthusiastic moments, he considered as types and annunciations of the sublime discovery which he proposed!

Among the number who were convinced by

Departure of a Fleet

From Philipono's "Nova Typis"

the reasoning and warmed by the eloquence of Columbus was Diego de Deza, a worthy and learned friar of the order of St. Dominic, at that time professor of theology in the convent of St. Stephen, but who became afterwards Archbishop of Seville, the second ecclesiastical dignitary of Spain. This able and erudite divine was a man whose mind was above the narrow bigotry of bookish lore; one who could appreciate the value of wisdom even when uttered by unlearned lips. He was not a mere passive auditor; he took a generous interest in the cause, and, by seconding Columbus with all his powers, calmed the blind zeal of his more bigoted brethren, so as to obtain for him a dispassionate if not an unprejudiced hearing. By their united efforts, it is said, they brought over the most learned men of the schools.* One great difficulty was to reconcile the plan of Columbus with the cosmography of Ptolemy, to which all scholars yielded implicit faith. How would the most enlightened of those sages have been astonished, had any one apprised them that the man, Copernicus, was then in existence, whose solar system should reverse the grand theory of Ptolemy, which stationed the earth in the centre of the universe!

* Remesal, *Hist. de Chiapa*, lib. xi., cap. 7.

Notwithstanding every exertion, however, there was a preponderating mass of inert bigotry and learned pride in this erudite body, which refused to yield to the demonstrations of an obscure foreigner, without fortune or connections, or any academic honors. "It was requisite," says Las Casas, "before Columbus could make his solutions and reasonings understood, that he should remove from his auditors those erroneous principles on which their objections were founded; a task always more difficult than that of teaching the doctrine." Occasional conferences took place, but without producing any decision. The ignorant, or what is worse, the prejudiced, remained obstinate in their opposition, with the dogged perseverance of dull men; the more liberal and intelligent felt little interest in discussions wearisome in themselves, and foreign to their ordinary pursuits; even those who listened with approbation to the plan regarded it as a delightful vision, full of probability and promise, but one which never could be realized. Fernando de Talavera, to whom the matter was especially intrusted, had too little esteem for it, and was too much occupied with the stir and bustle of public concerns, to press it to a conclusion; and thus the inquiry experienced continual procrastination and neglect.

Chapter IV.

FURTHER APPLICATIONS AT THE COURT OF CASTILE —COLUMBUS FOLLOWS THE COURT IN ITS CAMPAIGNS.

THE Castilian court departed from Salamanca early in the spring of 1487 and repaired to Cordova, to prepare for the memorable campaign against Malaga. Fernando de Talavera, now Bishop of Avila, accompanied the Queen as her confessor, and as one of her spiritual counsellors in the concerns of the war. The consultations of the board of Salamanca were interrupted by this event, before that learned body could come to a decision, and for a long time Columbus was kept in suspense, vainly awaiting the report that was to decide the fate of his application.

It has generally been supposed that the several years which he wasted in irksome solicitation were spent in the drowsy and monotonous attendance of antechambers; but it appears,

on the contrary, that they were often passed amidst scenes of peril and adventure, and that, in following up his suit, he was led into some of the most striking situations of this wild, rugged, and mountainous war. Several times he was summoned to attend conferences in the vicinity of the sovereigns, when besieging cities in the very heart of the Moorish dominions; but the tempest of warlike affairs, which hurried the court from place to place and gave it all the bustle and confusion of a camp, prevented those conferences from taking place, and swept away all concerns that were not immediately connected with the war. Whenever the court had an interval of leisure and repose, there would again be manifested a disposition to consider his proposal, but the hurry and tempest would again return and the question be again swept away.

The spring campaign of 1487, which took place shortly after the conference at Salamanca, was full of incident and peril. King Ferdinand had nearly been surprised and cut off by the old Moorish monarch before Velez Malaga, and the Queen and all the court of Cordova were for a time in an agony of terror and suspense until assured of his safety.

When the sovereigns were subsequently encamped before the city of Malaga, pressing its

memorable siege, Columbus was summoned to the court. He found it drawn up in its silken pavilions on a rising ground commanding the fertile valley of Malaga; the encampments of the warlike nobility of Spain extended in a semicircle on each side to the shores of the sea, strongly fortified, glittering with the martial pomp of that chivalrous age and nation, and closely investing that important city.

The siege was protracted for several months, but the vigorous defence of the Moors, their numerous stratagems, and fierce and frequent sallies allowed but little leisure in the camp. In the course of this siege, the application of Columbus to the sovereigns was nearly brought to a violent close,—a fanatic Moor having attempted to assassinate Ferdinand and Isabella. Mistaking one of the gorgeous pavilions of the nobility for the royal tent, he attacked Don Alvaro de Portugal and Doña Beatrix de Bobadilla, Marchioness of Moya, instead of the King and Queen. After wounding Don Alvaro dangerously, he was foiled in a blow aimed at the Marchioness, and immediately cut to pieces by the attendants.* The lady here mentioned was of extraordinary merit and force of character. She evidently took a great interest in the suit of Columbus, and

* Pulgar, *Cronica*, cap. 87. P. Martyr.

had much influence in recommending it to the Queen, with whom she was a particular favorite.*

Malaga surrendered on the 18th of August, 1487. There appears to have been no time during its stormy siege to attend to the question of Columbus, though Fernando de Talavera, the Bishop of Avila, was present, as appears by his entering the captured city in solemn and religious triumph. The campaign being ended, the court returned to Cordova, but was almost immediately driven from that city by the pestilence.

For upwards of a year the court was in a state of continual migration; part of the time in Saragossa, part of the time invading the Moorish territories by the way of Murcia, and part of the time in Valladolid and Medina del Campo. Columbus attended it in some of its movements, but it was vain to seek a quiet and attentive hearing from a court surrounded by the din of arms and continually on the march. Wearied and discouraged by these delays, he began to think of applying elsewhere for patronage, and appears to have commenced negotiations with King John II. for a return to Portugal. He wrote to that monarch on the subject, and received a letter in

* *Retrato del Buen Vasallo*, lib. ii., cap. 16.

reply, dated 20th of March, 1488, inviting him to return to his court, and assuring him of protection from any suits of either a civil or criminal nature that might be pending against him. He received, also, a letter from Henry VII. of England, inviting him to that country, and holding out promises of encouragement.

There must have been strong hopes, authorized about this time by the conduct of the Spanish sovereigns, to induce Columbus to neglect these invitations; and we find ground for such a supposition in a memorandum of a sum of money paid to him by the treasurer Gonzalez, to enable him to comply with a summons to attend the Castilian court. By the date of this memorandum, the payment must have been made immediately after Columbus had received the letter of the King of Portugal. It would seem to have been the aim of King Ferdinand to prevent his carrying his proposition to another and a rival monarch, and to keep the matter in suspense until he should have leisure to examine it, and, if advisable, to carry it into operation.

In the spring of 1489, the long-adjourned investigation appeared to be on the eve of taking place. Columbus was summoned to attend a conference of learned men, to be held

in the city of Seville; a royal order was issued for lodgings to be provided for him there; and the magistrates of all cities and towns through which he might pass, on his way, were commanded to furnish accommodations gratis, for himself and his attendants. A provision of the kind was necessary in those days, when even the present wretched establishments, called *posados*, for the reception of travellers, were scarcely known.

The city of Seville complied with the royal command, but, as usual, the appointed conference was postponed, being interrupted by the opening of a campaign, "in which," says an old chronicler of the place, "the same Columbus was found fighting, giving proofs of the distinguished valor which accompanied his wisdom and his lofty desires." *

The campaign in which Columbus is here said to have borne so honorable a part was one of the most glorious of the war of Granada. Queen Isabella attended with all her court, including, as usual, a stately train of prelates and friars, among whom is particularly mentioned the procrastinating arbiter of the pretensions of Columbus, Fernando de Talavera. Much of the success of the campaign is

* Diego Ortiz de Zuñiga, *An. de Sevilla*, lib. xii., anno 1489, p. 404.

ascribed to the presence and counsel of Isabella. The city of Baza, which was closely besieged and had resisted valiantly for upwards of six months, surrendered soon after her arrival; and on the 22d of December, Columbus beheld Muley El Zagal, the elder of the two rival kings of Granada, surrender in person all his remaining possessions, and his right to the crown, to the Spanish sovereigns.

During this siege a circumstance took place which appears to have made a deep impression on the devout and enthusiastic spirit of Columbus. Two reverend friars arrived one day at the Spanish camp, and requested admission to the sovereigns on business of great moment. They were two of the brethren of the convent established at the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. They brought a message from the Grand Soldan of Egypt, threatening to put to death all the Christians in his dominions, to lay waste their convents and churches, and to destroy the Sepulchre, if the sovereigns did not desist from the war against Granada. The menace had no effect in altering the purpose of the sovereigns, but Isabella granted a yearly and perpetual sum of one thousand ducats in gold,* for the support of the monks who had charge of the Sepulchre, and sent a

* Or 1423 dollars, equivalent to 4269 in our time.

veil, embroidered with her own hands, to be hung up at its shrine.*

The representations of these friars of the sufferings and indignities to which Christians were subjected in the Holy Land, together with the arrogant threat of the Soldan, roused the pious indignation of the Spanish cavaliers, and many burned with ardent zeal once more to revive the contests of the faith on the sacred plains of Palestine. It was probably from conversation with these frairs, and from the pious and chivalrous zeal thus awakened in the warrior throng around him, that Columbus first conceived an enthusiastic idea, or rather made a kind of mental vow, which remained more or less present to his mind until the very day of his death. He determined that, should his projected enterprise be successful, he would devote the profits arising from his anticipated discoveries, to a crusade for the rescue of the Holy Sepulchre from the power of the Infidels.

If the bustle and turmoil of this campaign prevented the intended conference, the concerns of Columbus fared no better during the subsequent rejoicings. Ferdinand and Isabella entered Seville in February, 1490, with great pomp and triumph. There were then

* Garibay, *Compend. Hist.*, lib. xviii., cap. 36.

preparations made for the marriage of their eldest daughter, the Princess Isabella, with the Prince Don Alonzo, heir-apparent of Portugal. The nuptials were celebrated in the month of April, with extraordinary splendor. Throughout the whole winter and spring the court was in a continual tumult of parade and pleasure, and nothing was to be seen at Seville but feasts, tournaments, and torch-light processions. What chance had Columbus of being heard amid these alternate uproars of war and festivity?

During this long course of solicitation, he supported himself, in part, by making maps and charts, and was occasionally assisted by the purse of the worthy friar Diego de Deza. It is due to the sovereigns to say, also, that whenever he was summoned to follow the movements of the court, or to attend any appointed consultation, he was attached to the royal suite, and lodgings were provided for him and sums issued to defray his expenses. Memorandums of several of these sums still exist in the book of accounts of the royal treasurer, Francisco Gonzalez, of Seville, which has lately been found in the archives of Simancas; and it is from these minutes that we have been enabled, in some degree, to follow the movements of Columbus during

his attendance upon this rambling and warlike court.

During all this time he was exposed to continual scoffs and indignities, being ridiculed by the light and ignorant as a mere dreamer, and stigmatized by the illiberal as an adventurer. The very children, it is said, pointed to their foreheads as he passed, being taught to regard him as a kind of madman.

The summer of 1490 passed away, but still Columbus was kept in tantalizing and tormenting suspense. The subsequent winter was not more propitious. He was lingering at Cordova in a state of irritating anxiety, when he learned that the sovereigns were preparing to depart on a campaign in the Vega of Granada, with a determination never to raise their camp from before that city until their victorious banners should float upon its towers.

Columbus was aware that when once the campaign was opened and the sovereigns were in the field, it would be in vain to expect any attention to his suit. He was wearied, if not incensed, at the repeated postponements he had experienced, by which several years had been consumed. He now pressed for a decisive reply with an earnestness that would not admit of evasion. Fernando de Talavera, therefore, was called upon by the sovereigns to hold a

definite conference with the scientific men to whom the project had been referred, and to make a report of their decision. The Bishop tardily complied, and at length reported to their majesties, as the general opinion of the Junto, that the proposed scheme was vain and impossible, and that it did not become such great princes to engage in an enterprise of the kind on such weak grounds as had been advanced.*

Notwithstanding this unfavorable report, the sovereigns were unwilling to close the door upon a project which might be productive of such important advantages. Many of the learned members of the Junto also were in its favor, particularly Fray Diego de Deza, tutor to Prince Juan, who from his situation and clerical character had access to the royal ear, and exerted himself strenuously in counteracting the decision of the board. A degree of consideration, also, had gradually grown up at court for the enterprise, and many men distinguished for rank and merit had become its advocates. Fernando de Talavera, therefore, was commanded to inform Columbus, who was still at Cordova, that the great cares and expenses of the wars rendered it impossible for the sovereigns to engage in any new enter-

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 2.

prise; but that when the war was concluded they would have both time and inclination to treat with him about what he proposed.*

This was but a starved reply to receive after so many days of weary attendance, anxious expectation, and deferred hope; Columbus was unwilling to receive it at second hand, and repaired to the court of Seville to learn his fate from the lips of the sovereigns. Their reply was virtually the same, declining to engage in the enterprise for the present, but holding out hopes of patronage when relieved from the cares and expenses of the war.

Columbus looked upon this indefinite postponement as a mere courtly mode of evading his importunity, and supposed that the favorable dispositions of the sovereigns had been counteracted by the objections of the ignorant and bigoted. Renouncing all further confidence, therefore, in vague promises, which had so often led to disappointment, and giving up all hopes of countenance from the throne, he turned his back upon Seville, indignant at the thought of having been beguiled out of so many precious years of waning existence.

* *Hist. del Almirante, ubi sup.*

THE CONVENT OF LA RABIDA.

Chapter V.

COLUMBUS AT THE CONVENT OF LA RABIDA.

ABOUT half a league from the little seaport of Palos de Moguer in Andalusia there stood, and continues to stand at the present day, an ancient convent of Franciscan friars, dedicated to Santa Maria de Rabida. One day a stranger on foot, in humble guise, but of a distinguished air, accompanied by a small boy, stopped at the gate of the convent, and asked of the porter a little bread and water for his child. While receiving this humble refreshment the prior of the convent, Juan Perez de Marchena, happening to pass by, was struck with the appearance of the

stranger, and observing from his air and accent that he was a foreigner, entered into conversation with him, and soon learned the particulars of his story. That stranger was Columbus.* He was on his way to the neighboring town of Huelva to see his brother-in-law, who had married a sister of his deceased wife.†

The prior was a man of extensive information. His attention had been turned in some measure to geographical and nautical science, probably from his vicinity to Palos, the inhabitants of which were among the most enterprising navigators of Spain, and made frequent voyages to the recently discovered islands and countries on the African coast. He was greatly interested by the conversation of Columbus, and struck with the grandeur of his views. It was a remarkable occurrence in the

* "Lo dicho Almirante Colon veniendo á la Rabida, que es un monastério de frailes en esta villa, el qual demandó á la porteria que le diesen para aquel niñico, que era niño, pan i agua que bebiese." The testimony of Garcia Fernandez exists in manuscript among the multifarious writings of the *Pleito*, or lawsuit, which are preserved at Seville. I have made use of an authenticated extract, copied for the late historian, Juan Baut. Muñoz.

† Probably Pedro Correa, already mentioned, from whom he had received information of signs of land in the west, observed near Puerto Santo.

The Convent of La Rabida

Redrawn from an old print

Wagner

CONVENT OF LA RABIDA.

monotonous life of the cloister, to have a man of such singular character, intent on so extraordinary an enterprise, applying for bread and water at the gate of his convent.

When he found, however, that the voyager was on the point of abandoning Spain to seek patronage in the court of France, and that so important an enterprise was about to be lost forever to the country, the patriotism of the good friar took the alarm. He detained Columbus as his guest, and diffident of his own judgment, sent for a scientific friend to converse with him. That friend was Garcia Fernandez, a physician, resident in Palos, the same who furnishes this interesting testimony. Fernandez was equally struck with the appearance and conversation of the stranger; several conferences took place at the convent, at which several of the veteran mariners of Palos were present. Among these was Martin Alonzo Pinzon, the head of a family of wealthy and experienced navigators of the place, celebrated for their adventurous expeditions. Facts were related by some of these navigators in support of the theory of Columbus. In a word, his project was treated with a deference in the quiet cloisters of La Rabida, and among the seafaring men of Palos, which had been sought in vain among the sages and

philosophers of the court. Martin Alonzo Pinzon especially, was so convinced of its

JUAN PEREZ DE MARCHENA.

feasibility that he offered to engage in it with purse and person, and to bear the ex-

penses of Columbus in a renewed application to the court.

Friar Juan Perez was confirmed in his faith by the concurrence of those learned and practical councillors. He had once been confessor to the Queen, and knew that she was always accessible to persons of his sacred calling. He proposed to write to her immediately on the subject, and entreated Columbus to delay his journey until an answer could be received. The latter was easily persuaded, for he felt as if, in leaving Spain, he was again abandoning his home. He was also reluctant to renew in another court the vexations and disappointments experienced in Spain and Portugal.

The little council at the convent of La Rabida now cast round their eyes for an ambassador to depart upon this momentous mission. They chose one Sebastian Rodriguez, a pilot of Lepe, one of the most shrewd and important personages in this maritime neighborhood. The Queen was at this time at Santa Fé, the military city which had been built in the vega before Granada after the conflagration of the royal camp. The honest pilot acquitted himself faithfully, expeditiously, and successfully, in his embassy. He found access to the benignant princess, and delivered the epistle of the friar. Isabella had always been favorably disposed to

the proposition of Columbus. She wrote in reply to Juan Perez, thanking him for his timely services, and requesting that he would repair immediately to the court, leaving Christopher Columbus in confident hope until he should hear further from her. This royal letter was brought back by the pilot at the end of fourteen days, and spread great joy in the little junto at the convent. No sooner did the warm-hearted friar receive it than he saddled his mule and departed privately, before midnight, for the court. He journeyed through the conquered countries of the Moors, and rode into the newly erected city of Santa Fé, where the sovereigns were superintending the close investment of the capital of Granada.

The sacred office of Juan Perez gained a ready entrance in a court distinguished for religious zeal; and once admitted to the presence of the Queen, his former relation as father confessor gave him great freedom of counsel. He pleaded the cause of Columbus with characteristic enthusiasm, speaking from actual knowledge of his honorable motives, his professional knowledge and experience, and his perfect capacity to fulfil the undertaking; he represented the solid principles upon which the enterprise was founded, the advantage that must attend its success, and the glory it must

shed upon the Spanish Crown. It is probable that Isabella had never heard the proposition urged with such honest zeal and impressive eloquence. Being naturally more sanguine and susceptible than the King, and more open to warm and generous impulses, she was moved by the representations of Juan Perez, which were warmly seconded by her favorite, the Marchioness of Moya, who entered into the affair with a woman's disinterested enthusiasm.* The Queen requested that Columbus might be again sent to her, and, with the kind considerateness which characterized her, bethinking herself of his poverty and his humble plight, ordered that twenty thousand *maravedis*† in florins should be forwarded to him, to bear his travelling expenses, to provide him with a mule for his journey, and to furnish him decent raiment, that he might make a respectable appearance at the court.

The worthy friar lost no time in communicating the result of his mission; he transmitted the money and a letter by the hands of an inhabitant of Palos, to the physician Garcia Fernandez, who delivered them to Columbus. The latter complied with the instructions con-

* *Retrato del Buen Vasallo*, lib. ii., cap. 16.

† Or 72 dollars, and equivalent to 216 dollars of the present day.

veyed in the epistle. He exchanged his threadbare garb for one more suited to the sphere of a court, and purchasing a mule, set out once more, reanimated by hopes, for the camp before Granada.*

* Most of the particulars of this visit of Columbus to the convent of La Rabida are from the testimony rendered by Garcia Fernandez in the lawsuit between Diego, the son of Columbus, and the Crown.

Chapter VI.

APPLICATION TO THE COURT AT THE TIME OF THE SURRENDER OF GRANADA.

[1492.]

WHEN Columbus arrived at the court he experienced a favorable reception, and was given in hospitable charge to his steady friend Alonzo de Quintanilla, the accountant-general. The moment, however, was too eventful for his business to receive immediate attention. He arrived in time to witness the memorable surrender of Granada to the Spanish arms. He beheld Boabdil, the last of the Moorish kings, sally forth from the Alhambra, and yield up the keys of that favorite seat of Moorish power; while the King and Queen, with all the chivalry and rank and magnificence of Spain, moved forward in proud and solemn procession to receive this token of submission. It was

one of the most brilliant triumphs in Spanish history. After near eight hundred years of painful struggle the crescent was completely cast down, the cross exalted in its place, and the standard of Spain was seen floating on the highest tower of the Alhambra. The whole court and army were abandoned to jubilee. The air resounded with shouts of joy, with songs of triumph, and hymns of thanksgiving. On every side were beheld military rejoicings and religious oblations; for it was considered a triumph, not merely of arms, but of Christianity. The King and Queen moved in the midst, in more than common magnificence, while every eye regarded them as more than mortal—as if sent by Heaven for the salvation and building up of Spain.* The court was thronged by the most illustrious of that warlike country and stirring era; by the flower of its nobility, by the most dignified of its prelacy, by bards and minstrels, and all the retinue of a romantic and picturesque age. There was nothing but the glittering of arms, the rustling of robes, the sound of music and festivity.

Do we want a picture of our navigator during this brilliant and triumphant scene? It is furnished by a Spanish writer:

* Mariana, *Hist. de España*, lib. xxv., cap. 18.

"A man obscure and but little known followed at this time the court. Confounded in the crowd of importunate applicants, feeding his imagination in the corners of antechambers with the pompous project of discovering a world, melancholy and dejected in the midst of the general rejoicing, he beheld with indifference, and almost with contempt, the conclusion of a conquest which swelled all bosoms with jubilee, and seemed to have reached the utmost bounds of desire. That man was Christopher Columbus." *

The moment had now arrived, however, when the monarchs stood pledged to attend to his proposals. The war with the Moors was at an end, Spain was delivered from its intruders, and its sovereigns might securely turn their views to foreign enterprise. They kept their word with Columbus. Persons of confidence were appointed to negotiate with him, among whom was Fernando de Talavera, who, by the recent conquest, had risen to be Archbishop of Granada. At the very outset of their negotiation, however, unexpected difficulties arose. So fully imbued was Columbus with the grandeur of his enterprise, that he would listen to none but princely conditions. His principal stipulation was, that he should be invested with the titles and privileges of admiral and viceroy over the countries he should discover, with one tenth of all

* Clemencin, *Elogio de la Reina Catolica*, p. 20.

gains, either by trade or conquest. The courtiers who treated with him were indignant at such a demand. Their pride was shocked to see one whom they considered as a needy adventurer, aspiring to rank and dignities superior to their own. One observed with a sneer that it was a shrewd arrangement which he proposed, whereby he was secure, at all events, of the honor of a command, and had nothing to lose in case of failure. To this Columbus promptly replied, by offering to furnish one eighth of the cost, on condition of enjoying an eighth of the profits. To do this he no doubt calculated on the proffered assistance of Martin Alonzo Pinzon, the wealthy navigator of Palos.

His terms, however, were pronounced inadmissible. Fernando de Talavera had always considered Columbus a dreaming speculator, or a needy applicant for bread ; but to see this man, who had for years been an indigent and threadbare solicitor in his antechamber, assuming so lofty a tone, and claiming an office that approached to the awful dignity of the throne, excited the astonishment as well as the indignation of the prelate. He represented to Isabella, that it would be degrading to the dignity of so illustrious a crown to lavish such distinguished honors upon a nameless stranger.

Such terms, he observed, even in case of success, would be exorbitant; but in case of failure would be cited with ridicule, as evidence of the gross credulity of the Spanish monarchs.

Isabella was always attentive to the opinions of her ghostly advisers, and the Archbishop, being the confessor, had peculiar influence. His suggestions checked her dawning favor. She thought the proposed advantages might be purchased at too great a price. More moderate conditions were offered to Columbus, and such as appeared highly honorable and advantageous. It was all in vain; he would not cede one point of his demands, and the negotiation was broken off.

It is impossible not to admire the great constancy of purpose and loftiness of spirit displayed by Columbus, ever since he had conceived the sublime idea of his discovery. More than eighteen years had elapsed since his correspondence with Paulo Toscanelli of Florence, wherein he had announced his design. The greatest part of that time had been consumed in applications at various courts. During that period, what poverty, neglect, ridicule, contumely, and disappointment had he not suffered! Nothing, however, could shake his perseverance, nor make him descend to terms which he considered beneath the dig-

nity of his enterprise. In all his negotiations he forgot his present obscurity, he forgot his present indigence; his ardent imagination realized the magnitude of his contemplated discoveries, and he felt himself negotiating about empire.

Though so large a portion of his life had worn away in fruitless solicitings; though there was no certainty that the same weary career was not to be entered upon at any other court; yet so indignant was he at the repeated disappointments he had experienced in Spain, that he determined to abandon it forever, rather than compromise his demands. Taking leave of his friends, therefore, he mounted his mule, and sallied forth from Santa Fé in the beginning of February, 1492, on his way to Cordova, whence he intended to depart immediately for France.

When the few friends who were zealous believers in the theory of Columbus saw him really on the point of abandoning the country, they were filled with distress, considering his departure an irreparable loss to the nation. Among the number was Luis de St. Angel, receiver of the ecclesiastical revenues in Arragon. Determined if possible to avert the evil, he obtained an immediate audience of the Queen, accompanied by Alonzo de Quinta-

nilla. The exigency of the moment gave him courage and eloquence. He did not confine himself to entreaties, but almost mingled reproaches, expressing astonishment that a queen who had evinced the spirit to undertake so many great and perilous enterprises, should hesitate at one where the loss could be so trifling, while the gain might be incalculable. He reminded her how much might be done for the glory of God, the exaltation of the Church, and the extension of her own power and dominion. What cause of regret to herself, of triumph to her enemies, of sorrow to her friends, should this enterprise, thus rejected by her, be accomplished by some other power! He reminded her what fame and dominion other princes had acquired by their discoveries; here was an opportunity to surpass them all. He entreated her majesty not to be misled by the assertions of learned men, that the project was the dream of a visionary. He vindicated the judgment of Columbus, and the soundness and practicability of his plans. Neither would even his failure reflect disgrace upon the Crown. It was worth the trouble and expense to clear up even a doubt upon a matter of such importance, for it belonged to enlightened and magnanimous princes to investigate questions of the kind,

and to explore the wonders and secrets of the universe. He stated the liberal offer of Columbus to bear an eighth of the expense, and informed her that all the requisites for this great enterprise consisted of but two vessels, and about three thousand crowns.

These and many more arguments were urged with that persuasive power which honest zeal imparts, and it is said the Marchioness of Moya, who was present, exerted her eloquence to persuade the Queen. The generous spirit of Isabella was enkindled. It seemed as if, for the first time, the subject broke upon her mind in its real grandeur, and she declared her resolution to undertake the enterprise.

There was still a moment's hesitation. The King looked coldly on the affair, and the royal finances were absolutely drained by the war. Some time must be given to replenish them. How could she draw on an exhausted treasury for a measure to which the King was adverse! St. Angel watched this suspense with trembling anxiety. The next moment reassured him. With an enthusiasm worthy of herself and of the cause, Isabella exclaimed, "I undertake the enterprise for my own crown of Castile, and will pledge my jewels to raise the necessary funds." This was the proudest moment in the life of Isabella; it stamped her

renown forever as the patroness of the discovery of the New World.

St. Angel, eager to secure this noble impulse, assured her majesty that there would be no need of pledging her jewels, as he was ready to advance the necessary funds. His offer was gladly accepted; the funds really came from the coffers of Arragon; seventeen thousand florins were advanced by the accountant of St. Angel out of the treasury of King Ferdinand. That prudent monarch, however, took care to have his kingdom indemnified some few years afterwards; for in remuneration of this loan, a part of the first gold brought by Columbus from the New World was employed in gilding the vaults and ceilings of the royal saloon in the grand palace of Saragoza, in Arragon, anciently the Aljaferia, or abode of the Moorish kings.*

Columbus had pursued his lonely journey across the Vega and reached the bridge of Pinos, about two leagues from Granada, at the foot of the mountain of Elvira; a pass famous in the Moorish wars for many a desperate encounter between the Christians and Infidels. Here he was overtaken by a courier from the Queen, spurring in all speed, who summoned him to return to Santa Fé. He hesitated for a

* Argensola, *Anales de Arragon*, lib. i., cap. 10.

moment, being loath to subject himself again to the delays and equivocations of the court; when informed, however, of the sudden zeal for the enterprise excited in the mind of the Queen, and the positive promise she had given to undertake it, he no longer felt a doubt, but turning the reins of his mule, hastened back, with joyful alacrity, to Santa Fé, confiding in the noble probity of that princess.

Chapter VII.

ARRANGEMENT WITH THE SPANISH SOVEREIGNS—PREPARATIONS FOR THE EXPEDITION AT THE PORT OF PALOS.

[1492.]

ON arriving at Santa Fé, Columbus had an immediate audience of the Queen, and the benignity with which she received him atoned for all past neglect. Through deference to the zeal she thus suddenly displayed, the King yielded his tardy concurrence, but Isabella was the soul of this grand enterprise. She was prompted by lofty and generous enthusiasm, while the King proved cold and calculating in this as in all his other undertakings.

A perfect understanding being thus affected with the sovereigns, articles of agreement were ordered to be drawn out by Juan de Coloma, the royal secretary. They were to the following effect :

1. That Columbus should have, for himself during his life, and his heirs and successors forever, the office of admiral in all the lands and continents which he might discover or acquire in the ocean, with similar honors and prerogatives to those enjoyed by the high admiral of Castile in his district.

2. That he should be viceroy and governor-general over all the said lands and continents; with the privilege of nominating three candidates for the government of each island or province, one of whom should be selected by the sovereigns.

3. That he should be entitled to reserve for himself one tenth of all pearls, precious stones, gold, silver, spices, and all other articles and merchandises, in whatever manner found, bought, bartered, or gained within his admiralty, the costs being first deducted.

4. That he, or his lieutenant, should be the sole judge in all causes and disputes arising out of traffic between those countries and Spain, provided the high admiral of Castile had similar jurisdiction in his district.

5. That he might then, and at all after times, contribute an eighth part of the expense in fitting out vessels to sail on this enterprise, and receive an eighth part of the profits.

The last stipulation, which admits Columbus to bear an eighth of the enterprise, was made in consequence of his indignant proffer, on being reproached with demanding ample emoluments while incurring no portion of the charge. He fulfilled his engagement, through the assistance of the Pinzons of Palos, and added a third vessel to the armament. Thus one eighth of the expense attendant on this grand expedition, undertaken by a powerful nation, was actually borne by the individual who conceived it, and who likewise risked his life on its success.

The capitulations were signed by Ferdinand and Isabella at the city of Santa Fé, in the Vega or plain of Granada, on the 17th of April, 1492. A letter of privilege or commission to Columbus, of similar purport, was drawn out in form, and issued by the sovereigns in the city of Granada, on the 30th of the same month. In this, the dignities and prerogatives of viceroy and governor were made hereditary in his family; and he and his heirs were authorized to prefix the title of Don to their names, a distinction accorded in those days only to persons of rank and estate, though it has since lost all value, from being universally used in Spain.

All the royal documents issued on this occa-

sion bore equally the signatures of Ferdinand and Isabella, but her separate crown of Castile defrayed all the expense; and, during her life, few persons, except Castilians, were permitted to establish themselves in the new territories.*

The port of Palos de Moguer was fixed upon as the place where the armament was to be fitted out, Columbus calculating, no doubt, on the co-operation of Martin Alonzo Pinzon, resident there, and on the assistance of his zealous friend the prior of the convent of La Rabida. Before going into the business details of this great enterprise, it is due to the character of the illustrious man who conceived and conducted it, most especially to notice the elevated, even though visionary spirit by which he was actuated. One of his principal objects was undoubtedly the propagation of the Christian faith. He expected to arrive at the extremity of Asia, and to open a direct and easy communication with the vast and magnificent empire of the Grand Khan. The conversion of that heathen potentate had, in former times, been a favorite aim of various pontiffs and pious sovereigns, and various missions had been sent to the remote regions of the East for that purpose. Columbus now considered

* Charlevoix, *Hist. St. Domingo*, lib. i., p. 79.

himself about to effect this great work; to spread the light of revelation to the very ends of the earth, and thus to be the instrument of accomplishing one of the sublime predictions of Holy Writ. Ferdinand listened with complacency to these enthusiastic anticipations. With him, however, religion was subservient to interest; and he had found, in the recent conquest of Granada, that extending the sway of the Church might be made a laudable means of extending his own dominions. According to the doctrines of the day, every nation that refused to acknowledge the truths of Christianity, was fair spoil for a Christian invader; and it is probable that Ferdinand was more stimulated by the accounts given of the wealth of Mangi, Cathay, and other provinces belonging to the Grand Khan, than by any anxiety for the conversion of him and his semi-barbarous subjects.

Isabella had noble inducements; she was filled with a pious zeal at the idea of effecting such a great work of salvation. From different motives, therefore, both of the sovereigns accorded with the views of Columbus in this particular, and when he afterwards departed on his voyage, letters were actually given him for the Grand Khan of Tartary.

The ardent enthusiasm of Columbus did not

stop here. Anticipating boundless wealth from his discoveries, he suggested that the treasures thus acquired should be consecrated to the pious purpose of rescuing the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem from the power of the Infidels. The sovereigns smiled at this sally of the imagination, but expressed themselves well pleased with it, and assured him that even without the funds he anticipated, they should be well disposed to that holy undertaking.* What the King and the Queen, however, may have considered a mere sally of momentary excitement, was a deep and cherished design of Columbus. It is a curious and characteristic fact, which has never been particularly noticed, that the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre was one of the great objects of his ambition, meditated throughout the remainder of his life, and solemnly provided for in his will. In fact, he subsequently considered it the main work for which he was chosen by Heaven as an agent, and that his great discovery was but a preparatory dispensation of Providence to furnish means for its accomplishment.

* "Protestè a vuestras Altezas que toda la ganancia desta mi empresa se gastase en la conquista de Jerusalem, y vuestras Altezas se rieron, y, dijeron que les placia, y que sin este tenian aquella gana."—*Primer Viage de Colon*, Navarrete, tom. i., p. 117.

A home-felt mark of favor, characteristic of the kind and considerate heart of Isabella, was accorded to Columbus before his departure from the court. An *albala*, or letter-patent, was issued by the Queen on the 8th of May, appointing his son Diego page to the Prince Juan, the heir-apparent, with an allowance for his support; an honor granted only to the sons of persons of distinguished rank.*

Thus gratified in his dearest wishes, after a course of delays and disappointments sufficient to have reduced any ordinary man to despair, Columbus took leave of the court on the 12th of May, and set out joyfully for Palos. Let those who are disposed to faint under difficulties, in the prosecution of any great and worthy undertaking, remember that eighteen years elapsed after the time that Columbus conceived his enterprise, before he was enabled to carry it into effect; that the greater part of that time was passed in almost hopeless solicitation, amidst poverty, neglect, and taunting ridicule; that the prime of his life was wasted away in the struggle, and that when his perseverance was finally crowned with success, he was about his fifty-sixth year. His example should encourage the enterprising never to despair.

* Navarrete, *Colec. de Viages*, tom. ii., doc. xi.

PALOS.

Chapter VIII.

COLUMBUS AT THE PORT OF PALOS—PREPARATIONS FOR THE VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY.

ON arriving at Palos Columbus repaired immediately to the neighboring convent of La Rabida, where he was received with open arms by the worthy prior, Fray Juan Perez, and again became his guest.* The port of Palos, for some misdemeanor, had been condemned by the royal

* Oviedo, *Cronica de las Indias*, lib. ii., cap. 5.

council to serve the Crown for one year with two armed caravals; and these were destined to form part of the armament of Columbus, who was furnished with the necessary papers and vouchers to enforce obedience in all matters necessary for his expedition.

On the following morning, the 23d of May, Columbus, accompanied by Fray Juan Perez, whose character and station gave him great importance in the neighborhood, proceeded to the church of St. George in Palos, where the *alcalde*, the *regidors*, and many of the inhabitants of the place had been notified to attend. Here, in presence of them all, in the porch of the church, a royal order was read by a notary public, commanding the authorities of Palos to have two caravels ready for sea within ten days after this notice, and to place them and their crews at the disposal of Columbus. The latter was likewise empowered to procure and fit out a third vessel. The crews of all three were to receive the ordinary wages of seamen employed in armed vessels, and to be paid four months in advance. They were to sail in such direction as Columbus, under the royal authority, should command, and were to obey him in all things, with merely one stipulation; that neither he nor they were to go to St. George la Mina, on the coast of Guinea,

nor to any other of the lately discovered possessions of Portugal. A certificate of their good conduct, signed by Columbus, was to be the discharge of their obligation to the Crown.*

Orders were likewise read, addressed to the public authorities, and the people of all ranks and conditions, in the maritime borders of Andalusia, commanding them to furnish supplies and assistance of all kinds, at reasonable prices, for the fitting out of the vessels, and penalties were denounced on such as should cause any impediment. No duties were to be exacted of any article furnished to the vessels; and all criminal processes against the person or property of any individual engaged in the expedition was to be suspended during his absence, and for two months after his return.†

With these orders the authorities promised implicit compliance; but when the nature of the intended expedition came to be known, astonishment and dismay fell upon the little community. The ships and crews demanded for such a desperate service were regarded in the light of sacrifices. The owners of vessels refused to furnish them; the boldest seamen shrank from such a wild and chimerical cruise into the wilderness of the ocean. All kinds

* Navarrete, *Colec. de Viages*, tom. ii., doc. vi.

† *Idem*, doc. viii., ix.

Port of Palos

PORT OF PALOS.

of frightful tales and fables were conjured up concerning the unknown regions of the deep; and nothing can be a stronger evidence of the boldness of this undertaking than the extreme dread of it in a community composed of some of the most adventurous navigators of the age.

Weeks elapsed without a vessel being procured, or anything else being done in fulfilment of the royal orders. Further mandates were therefore issued by the sovereigns, ordering the magistrates of the coast of Andalusia to press into the service any vessels they might think proper, belonging to Spanish subjects, and to oblige the masters and crews to sail with Columbus in whatever direction he should be sent by royal command. Juan de Peñalosa, an officer of the royal household, was sent to see that this order was properly complied with, receiving two hundred *maravedis* a day as long as he was occupied in the business, which sum, together with other penalties expressed in the mandate, was to be exacted from such as should be disobedient and delinquent. This letter was acted upon by Columbus in Palos and the neighboring town of Moguer, but apparently with as little success as the preceding. The communities of those places were thrown into complete confusion; tumults took place; but

nothing of consequence was effected. At length Martin Alonzo Pinzon stepped forward, with his brother, Vicente Yañez Pinzon, both navigators of great courage and ability, owners of vessels, and having seamen in their employ. They were related, also, to many of the seafaring inhabitants of Palos and Moguer, and had influence throughout the neighborhood. They engaged to sail on the expedition, and furnished one of the vessels required. Others, with their owners and crews, were pressed into the service by the magistrates under the arbitrary mandate of the sovereigns; and it is a striking instance of the despotic authority exercised over commerce in those times, that respectable individuals should thus be compelled to engage, with persons and ships, in what appeared to them a mad and desperate enterprise.

During the equipment of the vessels, troubles and difficulties arose among the seamen who had been compelled to embark. These were fomented and kept up by Gomez Rascon and Christoval Quintero, owners of the *Pinta*, one of the ships pressed into the service. All kinds of obstacles were thrown in the way by these people and their friends, to retard or defeat the voyage. The calkers employed upon the vessels did their work in a careless and imperfect manner, and on being commanded to do it over

again absconded.* Some of the seamen who had enlisted willingly repented of their hardihood or were dissuaded by their relatives, and sought to retract; others deserted and concealed themselves. Everything had to be effected by the most harsh and arbitrary measures, and in defiance of popular prejudice and opposition.

The influence and example of the Pinzons had a great effect in allaying this opposition, and inducing many of their friends and relatives to embark. It is supposed that they had furnished Columbus with funds to pay the eighth part of the expense which he was bound to advance. It is also said that Martin Alonzo Pinzon was to divide with him his share of the profits. As no immediate profit, however, resulted from this expedition, no claim of the kind was ever brought forward. It is certain, however, that the assistance of the Pinzons was all-important, if not indispensable, in fitting out and launching the expedition.†

After the great difficulties made by various courts in patronizing this enterprise, it is sur-

* Las Cases, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 77, MS.

† These facts concerning the Pinzons are mostly taken from the testimony given, many years afterwards, in a suit between Don Diego, the son of Columbus, and the Crown.

prising how inconsiderable an armament was required. It is evident that Columbus had reduced his requisitions to the narrowest limits, lest any great expense should cause impediment. Three small vessels were apparently all that he had requested. Two of them were light barks, called caravels, not superior to river and coasting-craft of more modern days. Representations of this class of vessels exist in old prints and paintings.* They were delineated as open, and without deck in the centre, but built up high at the prow and stern, with forecastles and cabins for the accommodation of the crew. Peter Martyr, the learned contemporary of Columbus, says that only one of the three vessels was decked. The smallness of the vessels was considered an advantage by Columbus, in a voyage of discovery, enabling him to run close to the shores, and to enter shallow rivers and harbors. In his third voyage, when coasting the Gulf of Paria, he complained of the size of the ship, being nearly a hundred tons burden. But that such long and perilous expeditions into unknown seas should be undertaken in vessels without decks, and that they should live through the violent tempests by which they were frequently assailed, remain among the

* See Appendix, article "Ships of Columbus."

singular circumstances of these daring voyages.

At length, by the beginning of August, every difficulty was vanquished, and the vessels were ready for sea. The largest, which had been prepared expressly for the voyage,

SHIPS OF COLUMBUS.

and was decked, was called the *Santa Maria:* on board of this ship Columbus hoisted his flag. The second, called the *Pinta*, was commanded by Martin Alonzo Pinzon, accompanied by his brother, Francisco Martin, as pilot. The third, called the *Niña*, had latine sails, and was commanded by the third of the

brothers, Vicente Yañez Pinzon. There were three other pilots, Sancho Ruiz, Pedro Alonzo Niño, and Bartholomeo Roldan. Roderigo Sanchez of Segovia was inspector-general of the armament, and Diego de Arana, a native of Cordova, chief *alguazil*. Roderigo de Escobar went as royal notary, an officer always sent in the armaments of the Crown, to take official notes of all transactions. There were also a physician and a surgeon, together with various private adventurers, several servants, and ninety mariners; making in all one hundred and twenty persons.*

The squadron being ready to put to sea, Columbus, impressed with the solemnity of his undertaking, confessed himself to the friar, Juan Perez, and partook of the sacrament of the communion. His example was followed by his officers and crew, and they entered upon their enterprise full of awe, and with the most devout and affecting ceremonials, committing themselves to the especial guidance and protection of Heaven. A deep gloom was spread over the whole community of Palos at their departure, for almost every one had some relative or friend on board of the squadron. The spirits of the seamen, already depressed by

* Charlevoix, *Hist. St. Domingo*, lib. i. Muñoz, *Hist. Nuevo Mundo*, lib. ii.

their own fears, were still more cast down at the affliction of those they left behind, who took leave of them with tears and lamentations, and dismal forebodings, as of men they were never to behold again.

Book III.

Chapter I.

DEPARTURE OF COLUMBUS ON HIS FIRST VOYAGE.

[1492.]

WHEN Columbus set sail on this memorable voyage, he commenced a regular journal, intended for the inspection of the Spanish sovereigns. Like all his other transactions, it evinces how deeply he was impressed with the grandeur and solemnity of his enterprise. He proposed to keep it, as he afterwards observed, in the manner of the Commentaries of Cæsar. It opened with a stately prologue, wherein, in the following words, were set forth the motives and views which led to his expedition :

"*In nomine D. N. Jesu Christi.* Whereas most Christian, most high, most excellent, and most powerful princes, king and queen of the Spains, and of the islands of the sea, our sovereigns, in the present year of 1492, after your highnesses had put an end to the

war with the Moors who ruled in Europe, and had concluded that warfare in the great city of Granada, where, on the 2d of January, of this present year, I saw the royal banners of your highnesses placed by force of arms on the towers of the Alhambra, which is the fortress of that city, and beheld the Moorish king sally forth from the gates of the city, and kiss the royal hands of your highnesses and of my lord the prince; and immediately in that same month, in consequence of the information which I had given to your highnesses of the lands of India, and of a prince who is called the Grand Khan, which is to say in our language, king of kings; how that many times he and his predecessors had sent to Rome to entreat for doctors of our holy faith, to instruct him in the same; and that the holy father had never provided him with them, and thus so many people were lost, believing in idolatries, and imbibing doctrines of perdition; therefore your highnesses, as Catholic Christians and princes, lovers and promoters of the holy Christian faith, and enemies of the sect of Mahomet, and of all idolatries and heresies, determined to send me, Christopher Columbus, to the said parts of India, to see the said princes, and the people and lands, and discover the nature and disposition of them all, and the means to be taken for the conversion of them to our holy faith; and ordered that I should not go by land to the east, by which it is the custom to go, but by a voyage to the west, by which course, unto the present time, we do not know for certain that any one hath passed. Your highnesses, therefore, after having expelled all the Jews from your kingdoms and territories, commanded me, in the same month of January, to proceed with a sufficient armament to the said

parts of India; and for this purpose bestowed great favors upon me, ennobling me, that henceforward I might style myself Don, appointing me high admiral of the Ocean sea, and perpetual viceroy and governor of all the islands and continents I should discover and gain, and which henceforward may be discovered and gained in the Ocean sea; and that my eldest son should succeed me, and so on from generation to generation forever. I departed, therefore, from the city of Granada, on Saturday, the 12th of May, of the same year 1492, to Palos, a seaport, where I armed three ships, well calculated for such service, and sailed from that port well furnished with provisions and with many seamen, on Friday, the 3d of August, of the same year, half an hour before sunrise, and took the route for the Canary Islands of your highnesses, to steer my course thence, and navigate until I should arrive at the Indies, and deliver the embassy of your highnesses to those princes, and accomplish that which you had commanded. For this purpose I intend to write during this voyage, very punctually from day to day, all that I may do, and see, and experience, as will hereafter be seen. Also, my sovereign princes, beside describing each night all that has occurred in the day, and in the day the navigation of the night, I propose to make a chart, in which I will set down the waters and lands of the Ocean sea in their proper situations under their bearings: and further, to compose a book, and illustrate the whole in picture by latitude from the equinoctial, and longitude from the west; and upon the whole it will be essential that I should forget to sleep and attend closely to the navigation to accomplish these things, which will be a great labor." *

* Navarrete, *Colec. Viag.*, tom. i., p. 1.

Thus are formally and expressly stated by Columbus the objects of this extraordinary voyage. The material facts still extant of this journal will be found incorporated in the present work.*

It was on Friday, the 3d of August, 1492, early in the morning, that Columbus set sail from the bar of Saltes, a small island formed by the arms of the Odiel, in front of the town of Huelva, steering in a southwesterly direction for the Canary Islands, whence it was his in-

* An abstract of this journal, made by Las Casas, has recently been discovered, and is published in the first volume of the collection of Señor Navarrete. Many passages of this abstract had been previously inserted by Las Casas in his *History of the Indies*, and the same journal had been copiously used by Fernando Columbus in the history of his father. In the present account of this voyage, the author has made use of the journal contained in the work of Señor Navarrete, the manuscript history of Las Casas, the *History of the Indies* by Herrera, the *Life of the Admiral* by his son, the *Chronicle of the Indies* by Oviedo, the manuscript history of Ferdinand and Isabella by Andres Bernaldes, curate of Los Palacois, and the *Letters and Decades of the Ocean Sea* by Peter Martyr; all of whom, with the exception of Herrera, were contemporaries and acquaintances of Columbus. These are the principal authorities which have been consulted, though scattered lights have occasionally been obtained from other sources.

tention to strike due west. As a guide by which to sail he had prepared a map or chart, improved upon that sent him by Paulo Toscanelli. Neither of those now exist, but the globe or planisphere finished by Martin Behem in this year of the Admiral's first voyage is still extant, and furnishes an idea of what the chart of Columbus must have been. It exhibits the coasts of Europe and Africa from the south of Ireland to the end of Guinea, and opposite to them, on the other side of the Atlantic, the extremity of Asia, or, as it was termed, India. Between them is placed the island of Cipango, or Japan, which, according to Marco Polo, lay fifteen hundred miles distant from the Asiatic coast. In his computations Columbus advanced this island about a thousand leagues too much to the east, supposing it to be about the situation of Florida*; and at this island he hoped first to arrive.

The exultation of Columbus at finding himself, after so many years of baffled hope, fairly launched on his grand enterprise, was checked by his want of confidence in the resolution and perseverance of his crews. As long as he remained within reach of Europe, there was no security that, in a moment of

* Malte-Brun, *Geograph. Universelle*, tom. ii., p. 283.

repentance and alarm, they might not renounce the prosecution of the voyage, and insist on a return. Symptoms soon appeared to warrant his apprehensions. On the third day, the *Pinta* made signal of distress; her rudder was

COLUMBUS TAKING LEAVE OF FERDINAND AND ISABELLA.

discovered to be broken and unhung. This Columbus surmised to be done through the contrivance of the owners of the caravel, Gomez Rascon and Christoval Quintero, to

disable their vessel, and cause her to be left behind. As has already been observed, they had been pressed into the service greatly against their will, and their caravel seized upon for the expedition, in conformity to the royal orders.

Columbus was much disturbed at this occurrence. It gave him a foretaste of further difficulties to be apprehended from crews partly enlisted on compulsion, and all full of doubt and foreboding. Trivial obstacles might, in the present critical state of his voyage, spread panic and mutiny through his ships, and entirely defeat the expedition.

The wind was blowing strongly at the time, so that he could not render assistance without endangering his own vessel. Fortunately, Martin Alonzo Pinzon commanded the *Pinta*, and being an adroit and able seaman, succeeded in securing the rudder with cords, so as to bring the vessel into management. This, however, was but a temporary and inadequate expedient; the fastenings gave way again on the following day, and the other ships were obliged to shorten sail until the rudder could be secured.

This damaged state of the *Pinta* as well as her being in a leaky condition, determined the Admiral to touch at the Canary Islands, and

seek a vessel to replace her. He considered himself not far from those islands, though a different opinion was entertained by the pilots of the squadron. The event proved his superiority in taking observations and keeping reckonings, for they came in sight of the Canaries on the morning of the 9th.

They were detained upwards of three weeks among these islands, seeking in vain another vessel. They were obliged, therefore, to make a new rudder for the *Pinta*, and repair her for the voyage. The latine sails of the *Niña* were also altered into square sails, that she might work more steadily and securely, and be able to keep company with the other vessels.

While sailing among these islands, the crew were terrified at beholding the lofty peak of Teneriffe sending forth volumes of flame and smoke, being ready to take alarm at any extraordinary phenomenon, and to construe it into a disastrous portent. Columbus took great pains to dispel their apprehensions, explaining the natural causes of those volcanic fires, and verifying his explanations by citing Mount Etna, and other well-known volcanoes.

While taking in wood and water and provisions in the island of Gomera, a vessel arrived from Ferro, which reported that three

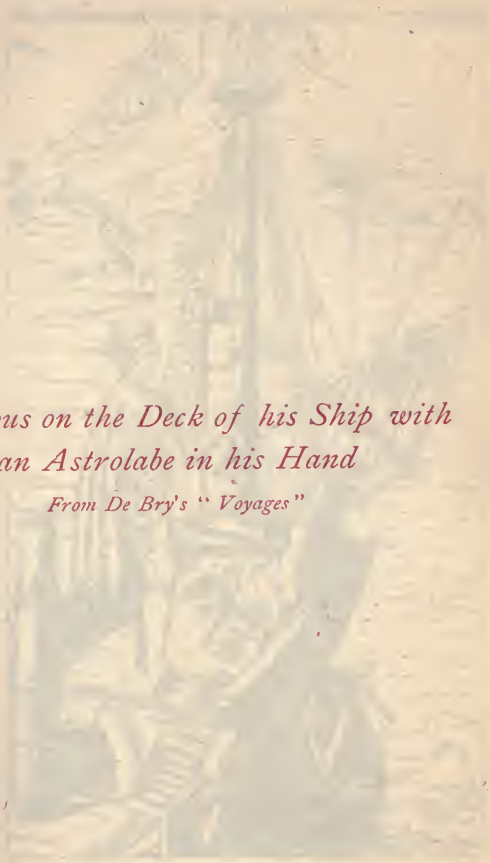
Portuguese caravels had been seen hovering off that island, with the intention, it was said, of capturing Columbus. The Admiral suspected some hostile stratagem on the part of the King of Portugal, in revenge for his having embarked in the service of Spain; he therefore lost no time in putting to sea, anxious to get far from those islands, and out of the track of navigation, trembling lest something might occur to defeat his expedition, commenced under such inauspicious circumstances.

Chapter III.

CONTINUATION OF THE VOYAGE—FIRST NOTICE OF THE VARIATION OF THE NEEDLE.

[1492.]

EARLY in the morning of the 6th of September, Columbus set sail from the island of Gomera, and now might be said first to strike into the region of discovery; taking leave of these frontier islands of the Old World, and steering westward for the unknown parts of the Atlantic. For three days, however, a profound calm kept the vessels loitering with flagging sails, within a short distance of the land. This was a tantalizing delay to Columbus, who was impatient to find himself far out of sight of either land or sail, which, in the pure atmosphere of these latitudes, may be descried at an immense distance. On the following Sunday, the 9th of September, at daybreak, he beheld Ferro,



Columbus on the Deck of his Ship with an Astrolabe in his Hand

From De Bry's "Voyages"

the last of the Canary Islands, about nine leagues distant. This was the island whence the Portuguese caravels had been seen ; he was therefore in the very neighborhood of danger. Fortunately a breeze sprang up with the sun, their sails were once more filled, and in the course of the day the heights of Ferro gradually faded from the horizon.

On losing sight of this last trace of land, the hearts of the crews failed them. They seemed literally to have taken leave of the world. Behind them was everything dear to the heart of man,—country, family, friends, life itself; before them everything was chaos, mystery, and peril. In the perturbation of the moment, they despaired of ever more seeing their homes. Many of the rugged seamen shed tears, and some broke into loud lamentations. The Admiral tried in every way to soothe their distress, and to inspire them with his own glorious anticipations. He described to them the magnificent countries to which he was about to conduct them; the islands of the Indian seas, teeming with gold and precious stones ; the regions of Mangi and Cathay, with their cities of unrivalled wealth and splendor. He promised them land and riches, and everything that could arouse their cupidity, or inflame their imaginations. Nor were these

promises made for purposes of mere deception; he certainly believed that he should realize them all.

He now issued orders to the commanders of the other vessels, that, in the event of separation by any accident, they should continue directly westward; but that after sailing seven hundred leagues, they should lay by from midnight until daylight, as at about that distance he confidently expected to find land. In the meantime, as he thought it possible he might not discover land within the distance thus assigned, and as he foresaw that the vague terrors already awakened among the seamen would increase with the space which intervened between them and their homes, he commenced a stratagem which he continued throughout the voyage. He kept two reckonings; one correct, in which the true way of the ship was noted, and which was retained in secret for his own government; in the other, which was open to general inspection, a number of leagues was daily subtracted from the sailing of the ship, so that the crews were kept in ignorance of the real distance they had advanced.*

* It has been erroneously stated that Columbus kept two journals. It was merely in the reckoning, or log-book, that he deceived the crew. His journal was

On the 11th of September, when about one hundred and fifty leagues west of Ferro, they fell in with part of a mast, which from its size appeared to have belonged to a vessel of about a hundred and twenty tons burden, and which had evidently been a long time in the water. The crews, tremblingly alive to everything that could excite their hopes or fears, looked with rueful eye upon this wreck of some unfortunate voyager, drifting ominously at the entrance of those unknown seas.

On the 13th of September, in the evening, being about two hundred leagues from the island of Ferro, Columbus, for the first time, noticed the variation of the needle; a phenomenon which had never before been remarked. He perceived, about nightfall, that the needle, instead of pointing to the north star, varied about half a point, or between five and six degrees, to the northwest, and still more on the following morning. Struck with this circumstance, he observed it attentively for three days, and found that the variation increased

entirely private, and intended for his own use and the perusal of the sovereigns. In a letter written from Granada, in 1503, to Pope Alexander VII., he says that he had kept an account of his voyages, in the style of the Commentaries of Cæsar, which he intended to submit to His Holiness.

as he advanced. He at first made no mention of this phenomenon, knowing how ready his people were to take alarm, but it soon attracted the attention of the pilots, and filled them with consternation. It seemed as if the very laws of nature were changing as they advanced, and that they were entering another world, subject to unknown influences.* They apprehended that the compass was about to lose its mysterious virtues, and, without this guide, what was to become of them in a vast and trackless ocean?

Columbus tasked his science and ingenuity for reasons with which to allay their terror. He observed that the direction of the needle was not to the polar star, but to some fixed and invisible point. The variation, therefore, was not caused by any fallacy in the compass, but by the movement of the north star itself, which, like the other heavenly bodies, had its changes and revolutions, and every day described a circle round the pole. The high opinion which the pilots entertained of Columbus as a profound astronomer gave weight to this theory, and their alarm subsided. As yet the solar system of Copernicus was unknown. The explanation of Columbus, therefore, was highly plausible and ingenious, and

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 6.

Columbus Discovering the Variation of the Compass

From De Lorgue's "Columbus"

it shows the vivacity of his mind, ever ready to meet the emergency of the moment. The theory may at first have been advanced merely to satisfy the minds of others, but Columbus appears subsequently to have remained satisfied with it himself. The phenomenon has now become familiar to us, but we still continue ignorant of its cause. It is one of those mysteries of nature, open to daily observation and experiment, and apparently simple from their familiarity, but which on investigation make the human mind conscious of its limits; baffling the experience of the practical, and humbling the pride of science.

Chapter III.

CONTINUATION OF THE VOYAGE—VARIOUS TERRORS OF THE SEAMEN.

[1492.]

ON the 14th of September the voyagers were rejoiced by the sight of what they considered harbingers of land. A heron, and a tropical bird called the Rabo de Junco,* neither of which are supposed to venture far to sea, hovered about the ships. On the following night they were struck with awe at beholding a meteor, or, as Columbus calls it in his journal, a great flame of fire, which seemed to fall from the sky into the sea, about four or five leagues distant. These meteors, common in warm climates, and especially under the tropics, are always seen in the serene azure sky of those latitudes, falling as it were from the heavens, but never

*The water-wagtail.

beneath a cloud. In the transparent atmosphere of one of those beautiful nights, where every star shines with the purest lustre, they often leave a luminous train behind them which lasts for twelve or fifteen seconds, and may well be compared to a flame.

The wind had hitherto been favorable, with occasional, though transient, clouds and showers. They had made great progress each day, though Columbus, according to his secret plan, contrived to suppress several leagues in the daily reckoning left open to the crew.

They had now arrived within the influence of the trade-wind, which, following the sun, blows steadily from east to west between the tropics, and sweeps over a few adjoining degrees of ocean. With this propitious breeze directly aft, they were wafted gently but speedily over a tranquil sea, so that for many days they did not shift a sail. Columbus perpetually recurs to the bland and temperate serenity of the weather, which in this tract of the ocean is soft and refreshing without being cool. In his artless and expressive language he compares the pure and balmy morning to those of April in Andalusia, and observes that they wanted but the song of the nightingale to complete the illusion.

"He had reason to say so," observes the venerable Las Casas; "for it is marvellous the suavity which we experienced when half way towards these Indies; and the more the ships approach the lands, so much more do they perceive the temperance and softness of the air, the clearness of the sky, and the amenity and fragrance sent forth from the groves and forests; much more certainly than in April in Andalusia." *

They now began to see large patches of herbs and weeds drifting from the west, and increasing in quantity as they advanced. Some of these weeds were such as grow about rocks, others such as are produced in rivers; some were yellow and withered, others so green as to have apparently been recently washed from land. On one of these patches was a live crab, which Columbus carefully preserved. They saw also a white tropical bird, of a kind which never sleeps upon the sea. Tunny fish also played about the ships, one of which was killed by the crew of the *Niña*. Columbus now called to mind the account given by Aristotle of certain ships of Cadiz, which, coasting the shores outside the straits of Gibraltar, were driven westward by an impetuous east wind, until they reached a part of the ocean covered with vast fields of weeds, resembling sunken islands, among which they beheld many tunny

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 36, MS.

fish. He supposed himself arrived in this weedy sea, as it had been called, from which the ancient mariners had turned back in dismay, but which he regarded with animated hope, as indicating the vicinity of land. Not that he had yet any idea of reaching the object of his search, the eastern end of Asia; for, according to his computation, he had come but three hundred and sixty leagues* since leaving the Canary Islands, and he placed the mainland of India much farther on.

On the 18th of September the same weather continued; a soft steady breeze from the east filled every sail, while, to use the words of Columbus, the sea was as calm as the Guadalquiver at Seville. He fancied that the water of the sea grew fresher as he advanced, and noticed this as a proof of the superior sweetness and purity of the air.†

The crews were all in high spirits; each ship strove to get in the advance, and every seaman was eagerly on the lookout; for the sovereigns had promised a pension of ten thousand *maravedis* to him who should first discover land. Martin Alonzo Pinzon crowded all canvas, and as the *Pinta* was a fast sailer,

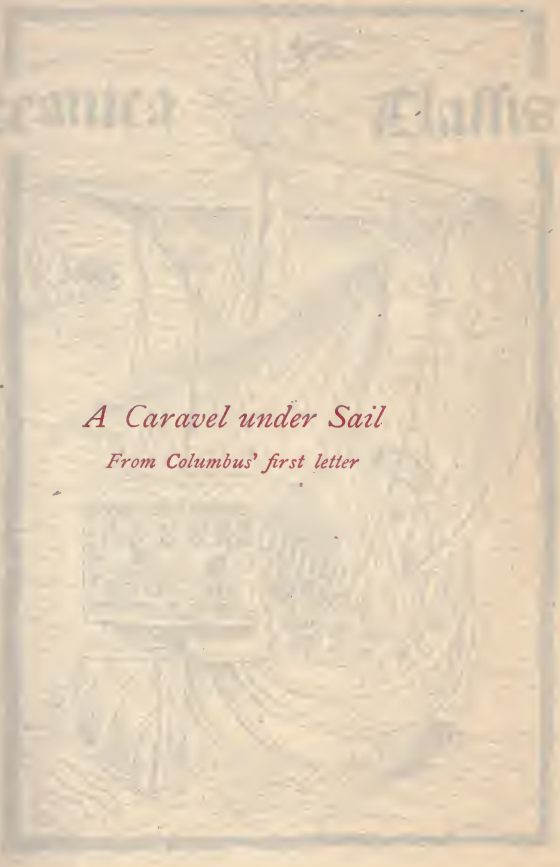
* Of twenty to the degree of latitude, the unity of distance used throughout this work.

† Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 36.

he generally kept the lead. In the afternoon he hailed the Admiral and informed him that, from the flight of a great number of birds, and from the appearance of the northern horizon, he thought there was land in that direction.

There was in fact a cloudiness in the north, such as often hangs over land; and at sunset it assumed such shapes and masses that many fancied they beheld islands. There was a universal wish, therefore, to steer for that quarter. Columbus, however, was persuaded that they were mere illusions. Every one who has made a sea voyage must have witnessed the deceptions caused by clouds resting upon the horizon, especially about sunset and sunrise; which the eye, assisted by the imagination and desire, easily converts into the wished-for land. This is particularly the case within the tropics, where the clouds at sunset assume the most singular appearances.

On the following day there were drizzling showers, unaccompanied by wind, which Columbus considered favorable signs; two boobies also flew on board the ships, birds which, he observed, seldom fly twenty leagues from land. He sounded, therefore, with a line of two hundred fathoms, but found no bottom. He supposed he might be passing between islands, lying to the north and south; but was



A Caravel under Sail

From Columbus' first letter

Oceanica Classis

unwilling to waste the present favoring breeze by going in search of them; beside, he had confidently affirmed that land was to be found by keeping steadfastly to the west; his whole expedition had been founded on such a presumption; he should, therefore, risk all credit and authority with his people were he to appear to doubt and waver, and to go groping blindly from point to point of the compass. He resolved, therefore, to keep one bold course always westward, until he should reach the coast of India; and afterwards, if advisable, to seek these islands on his return.*

Notwithstanding his precaution to keep the people ignorant of the distance they had sailed, they were now growing extremely uneasy at the length of the voyage. They had advanced much farther west than ever man had sailed before, and though already beyond the reach of succor, still they continued daily leaving vast tracts of ocean behind them, and pressing onward and onward into that apparently boundless abyss. It is true they had been flattered by various indications of land, and still others were occurring; but all mocked them with vain hopes: after being hailed with a transient joy, they passed away, one after another, and

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 20. Extract from *Journal of Columb.*, Navarrete, tom. i., p. 16.

the same interminable expanse of sea and sky continued to extend before them. Even the bland and gentle breeze, uniformly aft, was now conjured by their ingenious fears into a cause of alarm; for they began to imagine that the wind, in these seas, might always prevail from the east, and if so, would never permit their return to Spain.

Columbus endeavored to dispel these gloomy presages, sometimes by argument and expostulation, sometimes by awakening fresh hopes, and pointing out new signs of land. On the 20th of September the wind veered, with light breezes from the southwest. These, though adverse to their progress, had a cheering effect upon the people, as they proved that the wind did not always prevail from the east.* Several birds also visited the ships; three, of a small kind which keep about groves and orchards, came singing in the morning, and flew away again in the evening. Their songs cheered the hearts of the dismayed mariners, who hailed it as the voice of land. The larger fowl, they observed, were strong of wing, and

* "Mucho me fue necesario este viento contrario, porque mi gente andaban muy estimulados, que pensaban que no ventaban estos mares vientos para volver á España."—*Primer Viage de Colon.* Navarrete, tom. i., p. 12.

might venture far to sea ; but such small birds were too feeble to fly far, and their singing showed they were not exhausted by their flight.

On the following day there was either a profound calm, or light winds from the southwest. The sea, as far as the eye could reach, was covered with weeds; a phenomenon often observed in this part of the ocean, which had sometimes the appearance of a vast inundated meadow. This has been attributed to immense quantities of submarine plants, which grow at the bottom of the sea until ripe, when they are detached by the motion of the waves and currents, and rise to the surface.* These fields of weeds were at first regarded with great satisfaction, but at length they became, in many places, so dense and matted, as in some degree to impede the sailing of the ships, which must have been under very little headway. The crews now called to mind some tale about the frozen ocean, where ships were said to be sometimes fixed immovable. They endeavored, therefore, to avoid as much as possible these floating masses, lest some disaster of the kind might happen to themselves.† Others considered these weeds as proofs that the sea

* Humboldt, *Personal Narrative*, book i., cap. 1.
† *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 18.

was growing shallower, and began to talk of lurking rocks, and shoals, and treacherous quicksands; and of the danger of running aground, as it were, in the midst of the ocean, where their vessels might rot and fall to pieces, far out of the track of human aid, and without any shore where the crews might take refuge. They had evidently some confused notion of the ancient story of the sunken island of Atalantis, and feared they were arriving at that part of the ocean where navigation was said to be obstructed by drowned lands, and the ruins of an ingulfed country.

To dispel these fears the Admiral had frequent recourse to the lead; but though he sounded with a deep sea line, he found no bottom. The minds of the crew, however, had gradually become diseased. They were full of vague terrors and superstitious fancies; they construed everything into a cause of alarm, and harassed their commander by incessant murmurs.

For three days there was a continuance of light summer airs from the southward and westward, and the sea was as smooth as a mirror. A whale was seen heaving up its huge form at a distance, which Columbus immediately pointed out as a favorable indication, affirming that these fish were generally in the

neighborhood of land. The crews, however, became uneasy at the calmness of the weather. They observed that the contrary winds which they experienced were transient and unsteady, and so light as not to ruffle the surface of the sea, which maintained a sluggish calm like a lake of dead water. Everything differed, they said, in these strange regions from the world to which they had been accustomed. The only winds which prevailed with any constancy and force, were from the east, and they had not power to disturb the torpid stillness of the ocean; there was a risk, therefore, either of perishing amidst stagnant and shoreless waters, or of being prevented, by contrary winds, from ever returning to their native country.

Columbus continued with admirable patience to reason with these fancies, observing that the calmness of the sea must undoubtedly be caused by the vicinity of land in the quarter whence the wind blew, which, therefore, had not space sufficient to act upon the surface, and heave up large waves. Terror, however, multiplies and varies the forms of ideal danger a thousand times faster than the most active wisdom can dispel them. The more Columbus argued, the more boisterous became the murmurs of his crew, until, on Sunday, the 25th of September, there came on a heavy swell of the sea,

unaccompanied by wind. This phenomenon often occurs in the broad ocean; being either the expiring undulations of some past gale, or the movement given to the sea by some distant current of wind; it was, nevertheless, regarded with astonishment by the mariners, and dispelled the imaginary terrors occasioned by the calm.

Columbus, who as usual considered himself under the immediate eye and guardianship of Heaven in this solemn enterprise, intimates in his journal that this swelling of the sea seemed providentially ordered to allay the rising clamors of his crew; comparing it to that which so miraculously aided Moses when conducting the children of Israel out of the captivity of Egypt.*

* "Como la mar estuviese mansa y llana murmuraba la gente diciendo que, pues por alli no habia mar grande que nunca ventaria para volver á España; pero despues alzóse mucho la mar y sin viento, que los asombraba; por lo cual dice aqui el Almirante; *asi que muy necesario me fué la mar alta, que no pareció, salvo el tiempo de los Judios cuando salieron de Egipto contra Moyses que los sacaba de captiverio.*" —*Journal of Columbus*, Navarrete, tom. i., p. 12.

Chapter IV.

CONTINUATION OF THE VOYAGE—DISCOVERY OF LAND.

[1492.]

THE situation of Columbus was daily becoming more and more critical. In proportion as he approached the regions where he expected to find land, the impatience of his crews augmented. The favorable signs which increased his confidence were derided by them as delusive; and there was danger of their rebelling, and obliging him to turn back, when on the point of realizing the object of all his labors. They beheld themselves with dismay still wafted onward, over the boundless wastes of what appeared to them a mere watery desert, surrounding the habitable world. What was to become of them should their provisions fail? Their ships were too weak and defective even for the great

voyage they had already made, but if they were still to press forward, adding at every moment to the immense expanse behind them, how should they ever be able to return, having no intervening port where they might victual and refit?

In this way they fed each other's discontents, gathering together in little knots, and fomenting a spirit of mutinous opposition; and when we consider the natural fire of the Spanish temperament and its impatience of control, and that a great part of these men were sailing on compulsion, we cannot wonder that there was imminent danger of their breaking forth into open rebellion and compelling Columbus to turn back. In their secret conferences they exclaimed against him as a desperado, bent, in a mad fantasy, upon doing something extravagant to render himself notorious. What were their sufferings and dangers to one evidently content to sacrifice his own life for the chance of distinction? What obligations bound them to continue on with him; or when were the terms of their agreement to be considered as fulfilled? They had already penetrated unknown seas, untraversed by a sail, far beyond where man had ever before ventured. They had done enough to gain themselves a character for courage and

hardihood in undertaking such an enterprise and persisting in it so far. How much farther were they to go in quest of a merely conjectured land? Were they to sail on until they perished, or until all return became impossible? In such case they would be the authors of their own destruction.

On the other hand, should they consult their safety, and turn back before too late, who would blame them? Any complaints made by Columbus would be of no weight; he was a foreigner without friends or influence; his schemes had been condemned by the learned, and discountenanced by people of all ranks. He had no party to uphold him, and a host of opponents whose pride of opinion would be gratified by his failure. Or, as an effectual means of preventing his complaints, they might throw him into the sea, and give out that he had fallen overboard while busy with his instruments contemplating the stars; a report which no one would have either the inclination or the means to controvert.*

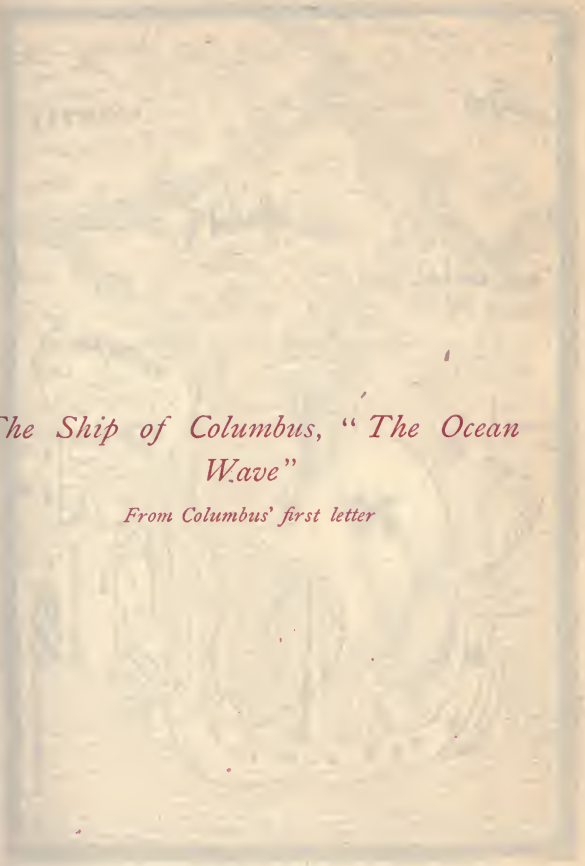
Columbus was not ignorant of the mutinous disposition of his crew; but he still maintained a serene and steady countenance, soothing some with gentle words, endeavoring to stimu-

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 19. Herrera, *Hist. Ind.* decad. i., lib. i., cap. 10.

late the pride or avarice of others, and openly menacing the refractory with signal punishment, should they do anything to impede the voyage.

On the 25th of September, the wind again became favorable, and they were able to resume their course directly to the west.

The airs being light, and the sea calm, the vessels sailed near to each other, and Columbus had much conversation with Martin Alonzo Pinzon on the subject of a chart, which the former had sent three days before on board of the *Pinta*. Pinzon thought that, according to the indications of the map, they ought to be in the neighborhood of Cipango, and the other islands which the Admiral had therein delineated. Columbus partly entertained the same idea, but thought it possible that the ships might have been borne out of their track by the prevalent currents, or that they had not come so far as the pilots had reckoned. He desired that the chart might be returned, and Pinzon, tying it to the end of a cord, flung it on board to him. While Columbus, his pilot, and several of his experienced mariners were studying the map, and endeavoring to make out from it their actual position, they heard a shout from the *Pinta*, and looking up, beheld Martin Alonzo Pinzon



The Ship of Columbus, "The Ocean Wave"

From Columbus' first letter

Fernada
hyspana
Ysabella
saluatore
Conceptoro
marie

mounted on the stern of his vessel, crying "Land! land! Señor, I claim my reward!" He pointed at the same time to the southwest, where there was indeed an appearance of land at about twenty-five leagues' distance. Upon this Columbus threw himself on his knees and returned thanks to God; and Martin Alonzo repeated the *Gloria in excelsis*, in which he was joined by his own crew and that of the Admiral.*

The seamen now mounted to the mast-head or climbed about the rigging, straining their eyes in the direction pointed out. The conviction became so general of land in that quarter, and the joy of the people so ungovernable, that Columbus found it necessary to vary from his usual course, and stand all night to the southwest. The morning light, however, put an end to all their hopes, as to a dream. The fancied land proved to be nothing but an evening cloud, and had vanished in the night. With dejected hearts they once more resumed their western course, from which Columbus would never have varied, but in compliance with their clamorous wishes.

For several days they continued on with the same propitious breeze, tranquil sea, and mild,

* *Journal of Columbus, Primer Viage*, Navarrete, tom. i.

delightful weather. The water was so calm that the sailors amused themselves with swimming about the vessel. Dolphins began to abound, and flying-fish, darting into the air, fell upon the decks. The continued signs of land diverted the attention of the crews, and insensibly beguiled them onward.

On the 1st of October, according to the reckoning of the pilot of the Admiral's ship, they had come five hundred and eighty leagues west since leaving the Canary Islands. The reckoning which Columbus showed the crew was five hundred and eighty-four, but the reckoning which he kept privately was seven hundred and seven.* On the following day, the weeds floated from east to west; and on the third day no birds were to be seen.

The crews now began to fear that they had passed between islands, from one to the other of which the birds had been flying. Columbus had also some doubts of the kind, but refused to alter his westward course. The people again uttered murmurs and menaces; but on the following day they were visited by such flights of birds, and the various indications of land became so numerous, that from a state of despondency they passed to one of confident expectation.

* Navarrete, tom. i., p. 16.

Eager to obtain the promised pension, the seamen were continually giving the cry of land, on the least appearance of the kind. To put a stop to these false alarms, which produced continual disappointments, Columbus declared that should any one give such notice, and land not be discovered within three days afterwards, he should thenceforth forfeit all claim to the reward.

On the evening of the 6th of October, Martin Alonzo Pinzon began to lose confidence in their present course, and proposed that they should stand more to the southward. Columbus, however, still persisted in steering directly west.* Observing this difference of opinion in a person so important in his squadron as Pinzon, and fearing that chance or design might scatter the ships, he ordered that, should either of the caravels be separated from him, it should stand to the west, and endeavor as soon as possible to join company again: he directed, also, that the vessels should keep near to him at sunrise and sunset, as at these times the state of the atmosphere is most favorable to the discovery of distant land.

On the morning of the 7th of October, at sunrise, several of the Admiral's crew thought they beheld land in the west, but so indis-

* *Journal of Columbus*, Navarrete, tom. i., p. 17.

tinctly that no one ventured to proclaim it, lest he should be mistaken, and forfeit all chance of the reward; the *Niña*, however, being a good sailer, pressed forward to ascertain the fact. In a little while a flag was hoisted at her mast-head, and a gun discharged, being the preconcerted signals for land. New joy was awakened throughout the little squadron, and every eye was turned to the west. As they advanced however, their cloud-built hopes faded away, and before evening the fancied land had again melted into air.*

The crews now sank into a degree of dejection proportioned to their recent excitement; but new circumstances occurred to arouse them. Columbus, having observed great flights of small field-birds going towards the southwest, concluded they must be secure of some neighboring land, where they would find food and a resting-place. He knew the importance which these Portuguese voyagers attached to the flight of birds, by following which they had discovered most of their islands. He had now come seven hundred and fifty leagues, the distance at which he had computed to find the island of Cipango; as there was no appearance of it,

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 20. *Journal of Columbus*, Navarrete, tom. i.

he might have missed it through some mistake in the latitude. He determined, therefore, on the evening of the 7th of October to alter his course to the west-southwest, the direction in which the birds generally flew, and continued that direction for at least two days. After all, it was no great deviation from his main course, and would meet the wishes of the Pinzons, as well as be inspiriting to his followers generally.

For three days they stood in this direction, and the farther they went the more frequent and encouraging were the signs of land. Flights of small birds of various colors, some of them such as sing in the fields, came flying about the ships, and then continued towards the southwest, and others were heard also flying by in the night. Tunny fish played about the smooth sea, and a heron, a pelican, and a duck were seen, all bound in the same direction. The herbage which floated by was fresh and green, as if recently from land, and the air, Columbus observes, was sweet and fragrant as April breezes in Seville.

All these, however, were regarded by the crews as so many delusions beguiling them on to destruction; and when on the evening of the third day they beheld the sun go down upon a shoreless ocean, they broke forth into

turbulent clamor. They exclaimed against this obstinacy in tempting fate by continuing on into a boundless sea. They insisted upon turning homeward, and abandoning the voyage as hopeless. Columbus endeavored to pacify them by gentle words and promises of large rewards; but finding that they only increased in clamor, he assumed a decided tone. He told them it was useless to murmur; the expedition had been sent by the sovereigns to seek the Indies, and, happen what might, he was determined to persevere, until, by the blessing of God, he should accomplish the enterprise.*

Columbus was now at open defiance with his

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 20. Las Casas, lib. i. *Journal of Columbus*, Navarrete, *Colec.*, tom. i., p. 19.

It has been asserted by various historians, that Columbus, a day or two previous to coming in sight of the New World, capitulated with his mutinous crew, promising, if he did not discover land within three days, to abandon the voyage. There is no authority for such an assertion, either in the history of his son Fernando, or that of the Bishop Las Casas, each of whom had the Admiral's papers before him. There is no mention of such a circumstance in the extracts made from the journal by Las Casas, which have recently been brought to light, nor is it asserted by either Peter Martyr or the Curate of Los Palacios, both contemporaries and acquaintances of Columbus, and who could scarcely have failed to mention so

crew, and his situation became desperate. Fortunately the manifestations of the vicinity of land were such on the following day as no longer to admit a doubt. Beside a quantity of fresh weeds, such as grow in rivers, they saw a green fish of a kind which keeps about rocks; then a branch of thorn with berries on it, and recently separated from the tree, floated by them; then they picked up a reed, a small board, and, above all, a staff artificially carved. All gloom and mutiny now gave way to san-

striking a fact, if true. It rests merely upon the authority of Oviedo, who is of inferior credit to either of the authors above cited, and was grossly misled as to many of the particulars of this voyage by a pilot of the name of Hernan Perez Matheo, who was hostile to Columbus. In the manuscript process of the memorable lawsuit between Don Diego, son of the Admiral, and the fiscal of the Crown, is the evidence of one Pedro de Bilbao, who testifies that he heard many times that some of the pilots and mariners wished to turn back, but that the Admiral promised them presents, and entreated them to wait two or three days, before which time he should discover land. ("Pedro de Bilbao muchas veces que algunos pilotos y marineros querian volverse sino fuera por el Almirante que les prometio donos, les rogó esperasen dos o tres dias i que antes del termino descubriera tierra.") This, if true, implies no capitulation to relinquish the enterprise.

On the other hand, it is asserted by some of the witnesses in the above-mentioned suit, that Colum-

guine expectation; and throughout the day each one was eagerly on the watch, in hopes of being the first one to discover the long-sought-for land.

In the evening, when, according to invariable custom on board the Admiral's ship, the mariners had sung the *Salve Regina*, or vesper hymn to the Virgin, he made an impressive address to his crew. He pointed out the goodness of God in thus conducting them by soft and favoring breezes across a tranquil ocean, cheering their hopes continually with fresh signs, increasing as their fears augmented, and thus leading and guiding them to a promised

bus, after having proceeded some few hundred leagues without finding land, lost confidence and wished to turn back; but was persuaded and even piqued to continue by the Pinzons. This assertion carries falsehood on its very face. It is in total contradiction to that persevering constancy and undaunted resolution displayed by Columbus, not merely in the present voyage, but from first to last of his difficult and dangerous career. This testimony was given by some of the mutinous men, anxious to exaggerate the merits of the Pinzons, and to depreciate that of Columbus. Fortunately, the extracts from the journal of the latter, written from day to day with guileless simplicity, and all the air of truth, disprove these fables, and show that on the very day previous to his discovery, he expressed a peremptory determination to persevere, in defiance of all dangers and difficulties.

land. He now reminded them of the orders he had given on leaving the Canaries, that, after sailing westward seven hundred leagues, they should not make sail after midnight. Present appearances authorized such a precaution. He thought it probable they would make land that very night; he ordered, therefore, a vigilant lookout to be kept from the forecastle, promising to whomsoever should make the discovery, a doublet of velvet, in addition to the pension to be given by the sovereigns.*

The breeze had been fresh all day, with more sea than usual, and they had made great progress. At sunset they had stood again to the west, and were ploughing the waves at a rapid rate, the *Pinta* keeping the lead, from her superior sailing. The greatest animation prevailed throughout the ships; not an eye was closed that night. As the evening darkened, Columbus took his station on the top of the castle or cabin on the high poop of his vessel, ranging his eye along the dusky horizon, and maintaining an intense and unremitting watch. About ten o'clock he thought he beheld a light glimmering at a great distance. Fearing his eager hopes might deceive him, he called to Pedro Gutierrez, gentleman of the King's bed-chamber, and inquired whether he

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 21.

saw such a light; the latter replied in the affirmative. Doubtful whether it might not yet be some delusion of the fancy, Columbus called Rodrigo Sanchez of Segovia, and made the same inquiry. By the time the latter had ascended the round-house, the light had disappeared. They saw it once or twice afterwards in sudden and passing gleams, as if it were a torch in the bark of a fisherman, rising and sinking with the waves; or in the hand of some person on shore, borne up and down as he walked from house to house. So transient and uncertain were these gleams, that few attached any importance to them; Columbus, however, considered them as certain signs of land, and, moreover, that the land was inhabited.

They continued their course until two in the morning, when a gun from the *Pinta* gave the joyful signal of land. It was first descried by a mariner named Rodrigo de Triana; but the reward was afterwards adjudged to the Admiral, for having previously perceived the light. The land was now clearly seen about two leagues distant, whereupon they took in sail, and laid to, waiting impatiently for the dawn.

The thoughts and feelings of Columbus in this little space of time must have been tumultuous and intense. At length, in spite of every difficulty and danger, he had accomplished his

object. The great mystery of the ocean was revealed; his theory, which had been the scoff of sages, was triumphantly established; he had secured to himself a glory durable as the world itself.

It is difficult to conceive the feelings of such a man, at such a moment; or the conjectures which must have thronged upon his mind, as to the land before him, covered with darkness. That it was fruitful, was evident from the vegetables which floated from its shores. He thought, too, that he perceived the fragrance of aromatic groves. The moving light he had beheld proved it the residence of man. But what were its inhabitants? Were they like those of the other parts of the globe; or were they some strange and monstrous race, such as the imagination was prone in those times to give to all remote and unknown regions? Had he come upon some wild island far in the Indian sea, or was this the famed Cipango itself, the object of his golden fancies? A thousand speculations of the kind must have swarmed upon him, as, with his anxious crews, he waited for the night to pass away, wondering whether the morning light would reveal a savage wilderness, or dawn upon spicy groves and glittering fanes and gilded cities, and all the splendor of Oriental civilization.

Book IV.

Chapter I.

FIRST LANDING OF COLUMBUS IN THE NEW WORLD.

IT was on Friday morning, the 12th of October, that Columbus first beheld the New World. As the day dawned he saw before him a level island, several leagues in extent, and covered with trees like a continual orchard. Though apparently uncultivated, it was populous, for the inhabitants were seen issuing from all parts of the woods and running to the shore. They were perfectly naked, and as they stood gazing at the ships, appeared by their attitudes and gestures to be lost in astonishment. Columbus made signal for the ships to cast anchor, and the boats to be manned and armed. He entered his own boat, richly attired in scarlet, and holding the royal standard; whilst Martin Alonzo Pinzon, and Vicente Yañez, his brother, put off in company in their boats, each with a banner of the enterprise emblazoned with a green cross, having on either

side the letters F. and Y., the initials of the Castilian monarchs Ferdnando and Ysabel, surmounted by crowns.

As he approached the shore, Columbus, who was disposed for all kinds of agreeable impressions, was delighted with the purity and suavity of the atmosphere, the crystal transparency of the sea, and the extraordinary beauty of the vegetation. He beheld, also, fruits of an unknown kind upon the trees which overhung the shores. On landing, he threw himself on his knees, kissed the earth, and returned thanks to God with tears of joy. His example was followed by the rest, whose hearts indeed overflowed with the same feelings of gratitude. Columbus then rising drew his sword, displayed the royal standard, and assembling around him the two captains, with Rodrigo de Escobedo, notary of the armament, Rodrigo Sanchez, and the rest who had landed, he took solemn possession in the name of the Castilian sovereigns, giving the island the name of San Salvador. Having complied with the requisite forms and ceremonies, he called upon all present to take the oath of obedience to him, as admiral and viceroy, representing the persons of the sovereigns.*

* In the *Tablas Chronologicas*, of Padre Claudio Clemente, is conserved a form of prayer, said to have

The feelings of the crew now burst forth in the most extravagant transports. They had recently considered themselves devoted men, hurrying forward to distruction; they now looked upon themselves as favorites of fortune, and gave themselves up to the most unbounded joy. They thronged around the Admiral with overflowing zeal, some embracing him, others kissing his hands. Those who had been most mutinous and turbulent during the voyage, were now most devoted and enthusiastic. Some begged favors of him, as if he had already wealth and honors in his gift. Many abject spirits, who had outraged him by their insolence, now crouched at his feet, begging pardon for all the trouble they had caused him, and promising the blindest obedience for the future.*

The natives of the island, when, at the dawn

been used by Columbus on this occasion, and which, by order of the Castilian sovereigns, was afterwards used by Balboa, Cortez, and Pizarro in their discoveries. "Domine Deus æterne et omnipotens, sacra tuo verbo cœlum, et terram, et mare creasti; benedicatur et glorificetur nomen tuum, laudetur tua majestas, quæ dignita est per humilem servum tuum, ut ejus sacrum nomen agnoscatur, et prædicetur in hac altera mundi parte." *Tab. Chron. de los Descub.*, decad. i. Valencia, 1689.

* Oviedo, lib. i., cap. 6. Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 40.

of day, they had beheld the ships hovering on their coast, had supposed them monsters which had issued from the deep during the night. They had crowded to the beach, and watched their movements with awful anxiety. Their veering about, apparently without effort, and the shifting and furling of their sails, resembling huge wings, filled them with astonishment. When they beheld their boats approach the shore, and a number of strange beings clad in glittering steel, or raiment of various colors, landing upon the beach, they fled in affright to the woods. Finding, however, that there was no attempt to pursue nor molest them, they gradually recovered from their terror, and approached the Spaniards with great awe; frequently prostrating themselves on the earth, and making signs of adoration. During the ceremonies of taking possession, they remained gazing in timid admiration at the complexion, the beards, the shining armor, and splendid dress of the Spaniards. The Admiral particularly attracted their attention, from his commanding height, his air of authority, his dress of scarlet, and the deference which was paid him by his companions; all which pointed him out to be the commander.* When they had still further recovered from their fears, they

* Las Casas, *ubi sup.*

approached the Spaniards, touched their beards, and examined their hands and faces, admiring their whiteness. Columbus was pleased with their gentleness and confiding simplicity, and suffered their scrutiny with perfect acquiescence, winning them by his benignity. They now supposed that the ships had sailed out of the crystal firmament which bounded their horizon, or had descended from above on their ample wings, and that these marvellous beings were inhabitants of the skies.*

The natives of the island were no less objects of curiosity to the Spaniards, differing, as they did, from any race of men they had ever seen. Their appearance gave no promise of either wealth or civilization, for they were entirely naked, and painted with a variety of colors. With some it was confined merely to a part of the face, the nose, or around the eyes; with others it extended to the whole body, and gave them a wild and fantastic appearance. Their complexion was of a tawny or copper hue, and they were entirely destitute of beards.

*The idea that the white men came from Heaven was universally entertained by the inhabitants of the New World. When in the course of subsequent voyages, the Spaniards conversed with the Cacique Nicaragua, he inquired how they came down from the skies, whether flying, or whether they descended on clouds. Herrera, decad. iii., lib. iv., cap. 5.

Their hair was not crisped, like the recently discovered tribes of the African coast, under the same latitude, but straight and coarse, partly cut short above the ears, but some locks were left long behind and falling upon their shoulders. Their features, though obscured and disfigured by paint, were agreeable; they had lofty foreheads and remarkably fine eyes. They were of moderate stature and well shaped; most of them appeared to be under thirty years of age; there was but one female with them, quite young, naked like her companions, and beautifully formed.

As Columbus supposed himself to have landed on an island at the extremity of India, he called the natives by the general appellation of Indians, which was universally adopted before the true nature of his discovery was known, and has since been extended to all the aboriginals of the New World.

The islanders were friendly and gentle. Their only arms were lances, hardened at the end by fire, or pointed with a flint, or the teeth or bone of a fish. There was no iron to be seen, nor did they appear acquainted with its properties; for, when a drawn sword was presented to them, they unguardedly took it by the edge.

Columbus distributed among them colored

caps, glass beads, hawks'-bells, and other trifles, such as the Portuguese were accustomed to trade among the nations of the gold coast of Africa. They received them eagerly, hung the beads round their necks, and were wonderfully pleased with their finery, and with the sound of the bells. The Spaniards remained all day on shore refreshing themselves after their anxious voyage amidst the beautiful groves of the island; and returned on board late in the evening, delighted with all they had seen.

On the following morning, at break of day, the shore was thronged with the natives; some swam off to the ships, others came in light barks which they called canoes, formed of a single tree, hollowed, and capable of holding from one man to the number of forty or fifty. These they managed dexterously with paddles, and, if overturned, swam about in the water with perfect unconcern, as if in their natural element, righting their canoes with great facility, and bailing them with calabashes.*

They were eager to procure more toys and trinkets, not, apparently, from any idea of their intrinsic value, but because everything

* The calabashes of the Indians, which served the purposes of glass and earthenware, supplying them with all sorts of domestic utensils, were produced on stately trees of the size of elms.

from the hands of the strangers possessed a supernatural virtue in their eyes, as having been brought from Heaven; they even picked up fragments of glass and earthenware as valuable prizes. They had but few objects to offer in return, except parrots, of which great numbers were domesticated among them, and cotton yarn, of which they had abundance, and would exchange large balls of five-and-twenty pounds' weight for the merest trifle. They brought also cakes of a kind of bread called cassava, which constituted a principal part of their food, and was afterwards an important article of provisions with the Spaniards. It was formed from a great root called *Yucca*, which they cultivated in fields. This they cut into small morsels, which they grated or scraped and strained in a press, making a broad thin cake, which was afterward dried hard, and would keep for a long time, being steeped in water when eaten. It was insipid, but nourishing, though the water strained from it in the preparation was a deadly poison. There was another kind of *Yucca* destitute of this poisonous quality, which was eaten in the root, either boiled or roasted.*

The avarice of the discoverers was quickly excited by the sight of small ornaments of

* Acosta, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. iv., cap. 17.

gold, worn by some of the natives in their noses. These the latter gladly exchanged for glass beads and hawk's-bells, and both parties exulted in the bargain, no doubt admiring each other's simplicity. As gold, however, was an object of royal monopoly in all enterprises of discovery, Columbus forbade any traffic in it without his express sanction; and he put the same prohibition on the traffic for cotton, reserving to the Crown all trade for it, wherever it should be found in any quantity.

He inquired of the natives where this gold was procured. They answered him by signs, pointing to the south, where, he understood them, dwelt a king of such wealth that he was served in vessels of wrought gold. He understood, also, that there was land to the south, the southwest, and the northwest; and that the people from the last-mentioned quarter frequently proceeded to the southwest in quest of gold and precious stones, making in their way descents upon the islands, and carrying off the inhabitants. Several of the natives showed him scars of wounds received in battles with these invaders. It is evident that a great part of this fancied intelligence was self-delusion on the part of Columbus; for he was under a spell of the imagination, which gave its own shapes and colors to every object.

He was persuaded that he had arrived among the islands described by Marco Polo, as lying opposite to Cathay in the Chinese sea, and he construed everything to accord with the account given of those opulent regions. Thus the enemies which the natives spoke of as coming from the northwest, he concluded to be the people of the mainland of Asia, the subjects of the great Khan of Tartary, who were represented by the Venetian traveller as accustomed to make war upon the islands, and to enslave their inhabitants. The country to the south, abounding in gold, could be no other than the famous island of Cipango; and the king who was served out of vessels of gold, must be the monarch whose magnificent city and gorgeous palace, covered with plates of gold, had been extolled in such splendid terms by Marco Polo.

The island where Columbus had thus for the first time set his foot upon the New World, was called by the natives Guanahani. It still retains the name of San Salvador, which he gave to it, though called by the English, Cat Island.* The light which he had seen the

* Some dispute having recently arisen as to the island on which Columbus first landed, the reader is referred for a discussion of this question to the Appendix, article "First Landing of Columbus."

evening previous to his making land, may have been on Watling's Island, which lies a few leagues to the east. San Salvador is one of the great cluster of the Lucayos, or Bahama Islands, which stretch southeast and northwest from the coast of Florida to Hispaniola, covering the northern coast of Cuba.

On the morning of the 14th of October the Admiral set off at daybreak with the boats of the ship to reconnoitre the island, directing his course to the northeast. The coast was surrounded by a reef of rocks, within which there was depth of water and sufficient harbor to receive all the ships in Christendom. The entrance was very narrow; within there were several sand-banks, but the water was as still as in a pool.*

The island appeared throughout to be well wooded, with streams of water, and a large lake in the centre. As the boats proceeded, they passed two or three villages, the inhabitants of which, men as well as women, ran to the shores, throwing themselves on the ground, lifting up their hands and eyes, either giving thanks to Heaven, or worshipping the Spaniards as supernatural beings. They ran along parallel to the boats, calling after the Spaniards, and inviting them by signs to land, offering them various

* *Primer Viage de Colon*, Navarrete, tom. i.

fruits and vessels of water. Finding, however, that the boats continued on their course, many threw themselves into the sea and swam after them, and others followed in canoes. The Admiral received them all with kindness, giving them glass beads and other trifles, which were received with transport as celestial presents, for the invariable idea of the savage was, that the white men had come from the skies.

In this way they pursued their course, until they came to a small peninsula, which, with two or three days' labor, might be separated from the mainland and surrounded with water, and was therefore specified by Columbus as an excellent situation for a fortress. On this were six Indian cabins, surrounded by groves and gardens as beautiful as those of Castile. The sailors being wearied with rowing, and the island not appearing to the Admiral of sufficient importance to induce colonization, he returned to the ships, taking seven of the natives with him, that they might acquire the Spanish language and serve as interpreters.

Having taken a supply of wood and water, they left the island of San Salvador the same evening, the Admiral being impatient to arrive at the wealthy country to the south, which he flattered himself would prove the famous island of Cipango.

Chapter II.

CRUISE AMONG THE BAHAMA ISLANDS.

[1492.]

ON leaving San Salvador Columbus was at a loss which way to direct his course. A great number of islands, green, and level, and fertile, invited him in different directions. The Indians on board of his vessel intimated by signs that they were innumerable, well peopled, and at war with one another. They mentioned the names of above a hundred. Columbus now had no longer a doubt that he was among the islands described by Marco Polo as studding the vast sea of Chin, or China, and laying at a great distance from the mainland. These, according to the Venetian, amounted to between seven and eight thousand, and abounded with drugs and spices and odoriferous trees;

together with gold and silver and many other precious objects of commerce.*

Animated by the idea of exploring this opulent archipelego, he selected the largest island in sight for his next visit; it appeared to be about five leagues' distance, and he understood from his Indians, that the natives were richer than those of San Salvador, wearing bracelets and anklets, and other ornaments of massive gold.

The night coming on, Columbus ordered that the ships should lie to, as the navigation was difficult and dangerous among these unknown islands, and he feared to venture upon a strange coast in the dark. In the morning they again made sail, but meeting with counter-currents, it was not until sunset that they anchored at the island. The next morning (16th) they went on shore, and Columbus took solemn possession, giving the island the name of Santa Maria de la Concepcion. The same scene occurred with the inhabitants as with those of San Salvador. They manifested the same astonishment and awe; the same gentleness and simplicity, and the same nakedness and absence of all wealth. Columbus looked in vain for bracelets and anklets of gold, or

* *Marco Polo*, book iii., chap 4; English translation by W. Marsdon.

for any other precious articles: they had been either fictions of his Indian guides, or his own misinterpretations.

Returning on board, he prepared to make sail, when one of the Indians of San Salvador, who was on board the *Niña*, plunged into the sea, and swam to a large canoe filled with natives. The boat of the caravel put off in pursuit, but the Indians managed their light bark with too much velocity to be overtaken, and reaching the land, fled to the woods. The sailors took the canoe as a prize, and returned on board the caravel. Shortly afterwards a small canoe approached one of the ships, from a different part of the island, with a single Indian on board, who came to offer a ball of cotton in exchange for hawks'-bells. As he paused when close to the vessel, and feared to enter, several sailors threw themselves into the sea and took him prisoner.

Columbus having seen all that had passed from his station on the high poop of the vessel, ordered the captive to be brought to him; he came trembling with fear, and humbly offered his ball of cotton as a gift. The Admiral received him with the utmost benignity, and declining his offering, put a colored cap upon his head, strings of green beads around his arms, and hawks'-bells in his ears, then or-

dering him and his ball of cotton to be replaced in the canoe, dismissed him, astonished and overjoyed. He ordered that the canoe, also, which had been seized and fastened to the *Niña*, should be cast loose, to be regained by its proprietors. When the Indian reached the shore, his countrymen thronged around him, examining and admiring his finery, and listening to his account of the kind treatment he experienced.

Such were the gentle and sage precautions continually taken by Columbus to impress the natives favorably. Another instance of the kind occurred after leaving the island of Concepcion, when the caravels stood for the larger island, several leagues to the west. Midway between the two islands, they overtook a single Indian in a canoe. He had a mere morsel of cassava bread and a calabash of water for sea-stores, and a little red paint, like dragon's-blood, for personal decoration when he should land. A string of glass beads, such as had been given to the natives of San Salvador, showed that he had come thence, and was probably pressing from island to island, to give notice of the ships. Columbus admired the hardiness of this simple navigator, making such an extensive voyage in so frail a bark. As the island was still distant, he ordered that

both the Indian and his canoe should be taken on board; where he treated him with the greatest kindness, giving him bread and honey to eat, and wine to drink. The weather being very calm, they did not reach the island until too dark to anchor, through fear of cutting their cables with rocks. The sea about these islands was so transparent, that in the daytime they could see the bottom and choose their ground; and so deep, that at two gun-shot distance there was no anchorage. Hoisting out the canoe of their Indian voyager, therefore, and restoring to him all his effects, they sent him joyfully ashore, to prepare the natives for their arrival, while their ships lay to until morning.

This kindness had the desired effect. The natives surrounded the ships in their canoes during the night, bringing fruits and roots, and the pure water of their springs. Columbus distributed trifling presents among them, and to those who came on board he gave sugar and honey.

Landing the next morning he gave to this island the name of Fernandina, in honor of the King; it is the same at present called Exuma. The inhabitants were similar in every respect to those of the preceding islands, excepting that they appeared more ingenious

and intelligent. Some of the women wore mantles and aprons of cotton, but for the most part they were entirely naked. Their habitations were constructed in the form of a pavilion or high circular tent, of branches of trees, of reeds, and palm leaves. They were kept very clean and neat, and sheltered under spreading trees. For beds they had nets of cotton extending from two posts, which they called *hamacs*, a name since in universal use among seamen.

In endeavoring to circumnavigate the island, Columbus found, within two leagues of the northwest cape, a noble harbor, sufficient to hold a hundred ships, with two entrances formed by an island which lay in the mouth of it. Here, while the men landed with the casks in search of water, he reposed under the shade of the groves, which, he says, were more beautiful than any he had ever beheld; "the country was as fresh and green as in the month of May in Andalusia; the trees, the fruit, the herbs, the flowers, the very stones for the most part, as different from those of Spain as night from day." * The inhabitants gave the same proofs as the other islanders, of being totally unaccustomed to the sight of civilized man. They regarded

* *Primer Viage de Colon*, Navarrete, lib. i.

Native Huts, Hamacs, Etc.

Redrawn from Gottfriedt's "Newe Welt"

the Spaniards with awe and admiration, approached them with propitiatory offerings of whatever their poverty, or rather their simple and natural mode of life, afforded; the fruits of their fields and groves, the cotton, which was their article of greatest value, and their domesticated parrots. They took those who were in search of water to the coolest springs, the sweetest and freshest runs, filling their casks, and rolling them to the boats; thus seeking in every way to gratify their celestial visitors.

However pleasing this state of primeval poverty might be to the imagination of a poet, it was a source of continual disappointment to the Spaniards, whose avarice had been whetted to the quick by scanty specimens of gold, and by the information of golden islands continually given by the Indians.

Leaving Fernandina on the 19th of October, they steered to the southeast in quest of an island called Saometo, where Columbus understood from the signs of the guides, there was a mine of gold, and a king, the sovereign of all the surrounding islands, who dwelt in a large city and possessed great treasures, wearing rich clothing and jewels of gold. They found the island, but neither the monarch nor the mine. Either Columbus had misunderstood the natives, or they, measuring things

by their own poverty, had exaggerated the paltry state and trivial ornaments of some savage chieftain. Delightful as the other islands had appeared, Columbus declared that this surpassed them all. Like those, it was covered with trees and shrubs and herbs of an unknown kind. The climate had the same soft temperature; the air was delicate and balmy; the land was higher, with a fine verdant hill; the coast of a fine sand, gently laved by transparent billows.

At the southwest end of the island he found fine lakes of fresh water, overhung with groves, and surrounded by banks covered with herbage. Here he ordered all the casks of the ships to be filled.

"Here are large lakes," says he in his journal, "and the groves about them are marvellous; and here, and in all the island, everything is green, as in April in Andalusia. The singing of the birds is such, that it seems as if one would never desire to depart hence. There are flocks of parrots which obscure the sun, and other birds, large and small, of so many kinds, all different from ours, that it is wonderful; and besides, there are trees of a thousand species, each having its particular fruit and all of marvellous flavor, so that I am in the greatest trouble in the world not to know them, for I am very certain that they are each of great value. I shall bring home some of them as specimens, and also some of the herbs."

To this beautiful island he gave the name of his royal patroness, Isabella; it is the same at present called Isla Larga and Exumeta. Columbus was intent on discovering the drugs and spices of the East, and on approaching this island, had fancied he perceived in the air the spicy odors said to be wafted from the islands of the Indian seas.

"As I arrived at this cape," says he, "there came thence a fragrance so good and soft of the flowers or trees of the land, that it was the sweetest thing in the world. I believe there are here many herbs and trees which would be of great price in Spain for tinctures, medicines, and spices; but I know nothing of them, which gives me great concern." *

The fish, which abounded in these seas, partook of the novelty which characterized most of the objects in this new world. They rivalled the birds in tropical brilliancy of color, the scales of some of them glancing back the rays of light like precious stones; as they sported about the ships, they flashed gleams of gold and silver through the clear waves; and the dolphins, taken out of their element, delighted the eye with the changes of colors ascribed in fable to the chameleon.

No animals were seen in these islands excepting a species of dog which never barked,

**Primer Viage de Colon*, Navarrete, cap. I.

a kind of coney or rabbit called "*utia*" by the natives, together with numerous lizards and guanas. The last were regarded with disgust and horror by the Spaniards, supposing them to be fierce and noxious serpents; but they were found afterwards to be perfectly harmless, and their flesh to be esteemed a great delicacy by the Indians.

For several days Columbus hovered about this island, seeking in vain to find its imaginary monarch, or to establish a communication with him, until, at length, he reluctantly became convinced of his error. No sooner, however, did one delusion fade away, than another succeeded. In reply to the continual inquiries made by the Spaniards, after the source whence they produced their gold, the natives uniformly pointed to the south. Columbus now began to hear of an island in that direction, called Cuba, but all that he could collect concerning it from the signs of the natives was colored by his imagination. He understood it to be of great extent, abounding in gold, and pearls, and spices, and carrying on an extensive commerce in those precious articles; and that large merchant ships came to trade with its inhabitants.

Comparing these misinterpreted accounts with the coast of Asia, as laid down in his map, after the descriptions of Marco Polo, he

concluded that this island must be Cipango, and the merchant ships mentioned must be those of the Grand Khan, who maintained an extensive commerce in these seas. He formed his plan accordingly, determined to sail immediately for this island, and make himself acquainted with its ports, cities, and productions, for the purpose of establishing relations of traffic. He would then seek another great island called Bohio, of which the natives gave likewise marvellous accounts. His sojourn in those islands would depend upon the quantities of gold, spices, precious stones, and other objects of Oriental trade which he should find there. After this he would proceed to the mainland of India, which must be within ten days' sail, seek the city Quinsai, which, according to Marco Polo, was one of the most magnificent capitals in the world; he would there deliver in person the letters of the Castilian sovereigns to the Grand Khan, and, when he received his reply, return triumphantly to Spain with this document, to prove that he had accomplished the great object of his voyage.* Such was the splendid scheme with which Columbus fed his imagination, when about to leave the Bahamas in quest of the island of Cuba.

* *Journal of Columbus*, Navarrete, tom. i.

Chapter III.

DISCOVERY AND COASTING OF CUBA.

[1492]

FOR several days the departure of Columbus was delayed by contrary winds and calms, attended by heavy showers, which last had prevailed, more or less, since his arrival among the islands. It was the season of the autumnal rains, which in those torrid climates succeed the parching heats of summer, commencing about the decrease of the August moon, and lasting until the month of November.

At length, at midnight, October 24th, he set sail from the island of Isabella, but was nearly becalmed until mid-day; a gentle wind then sprang up, and, as he observes, began to blow most amorously. Every sail was spread, and he stood towards the west-southwest, the

direction in which he was told the land of Cuba lay from Isabella. After three days' navigation, in the course of which he touched at a group of seven or eight small islands, which he called Islas de Arena, supposed to be the present Mucaras islands, and having crossed the Bahama bank and channel, he arrived on the morning of the 28th October, in sight of Cuba. The part which he first discovered is supposed to be the coast to the west of Nuevitas del Principe.

As he approached this noble island, he was struck with its magnitude, and the grandeur of its features; its high and airy mountains, which reminded him of those of Sicily; its fertile valleys, and long sweeping plains watered by noble rivers; its stately forests; its bold promontories, and stretching headlands, which melted away into the remotest distance. He anchored in a beautiful river, of transparent clearness, free from rocks and shoals, its banks overhung with trees. Here, landing and taking possession of the island, he gave it the name of Juana, in honor of Prince Juan, and to the river the name of San Salvador.

On the arrival of the ships, two canoes put off from the shore, but fled on seeing the boat approach to sound the river for anchorage.

The Admiral visited two cabins, abandoned by their inhabitants. They contained but a few nets made of the fibres of the palm-tree, hooks and harpoons of bone, and some other fishing implements, and one of the kind of dogs he had met with on the smaller islands, which never bark. He ordered that nothing should be taken away or deranged.

Returning to his boat, he proceeded for some distance up the river, more and more enchanted with the beauty of the country. The banks were covered with high and wide-spreading trees, some bearing fruits, others flowers, while in some both fruit and flower were mingled, bespeaking a perpetual round of fertility ; among them were many palms, but differing from those of Spain and Africa ; with the great leaves of these the natives thatched their cabins.

The continual eulogies made by Columbus on the beauty of the country were warranted by the kind of scenery he was beholding. There is a wonderful splendor, variety, and luxuriance in the vegetation of those quick and ardent climates. The verdure of the groves and the colors of the flowers and blossoms derive a vividness from the transparent purity of the air and the deep serenity of the azure heavens. The forests, too, are full of life,

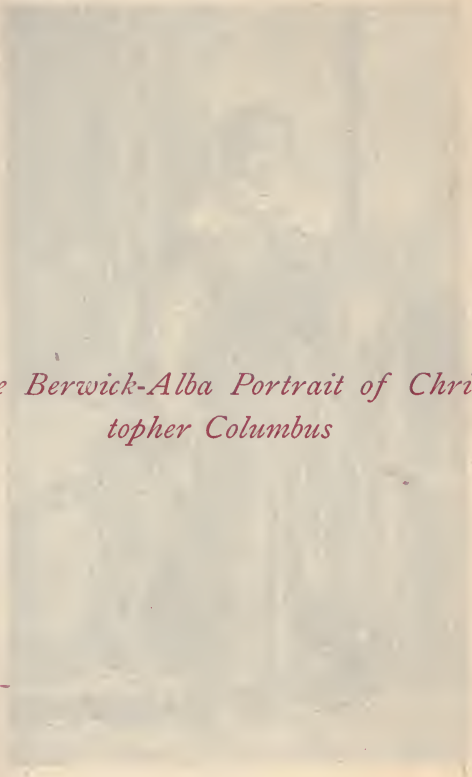
swarming with birds of brilliant plumage. Painted varieties of parrots and woodpeckers create a glitter amidst the verdure of the grove, and humming-birds rove from flower to flower, resembling, as has well been said, animated particles of a rainbow. The scarlet flamingoes, too, seen sometimes through an opening of a forest in a distant savanna, have the appearance of soldiers drawn up in battalion, with an advanced scout on the alert, to give notice of approaching danger. Nor is the least beautiful part of animated nature the various tribes of insects peopling every plant, and displaying brilliant coats-of-mail, which sparkle like precious gems.*

Such is the splendor of animal and vegetable creation in these tropical climates, where an ardent sun imparts its own lustre to every object, and quickens nature into exuberant fecundity. The birds, in general, are not remarkable for their notes, for it has been observed that in the feathered race sweetness of song rarely accompanies brilliancy of plumage. Columbus remarks, however, that there were various kinds which sang sweetly among the trees, and he frequently deceived himself

* The ladies of Havana, on gala occasions, wear in their hair numbers of those insects, which have a brilliancy equal to rubies, sapphires, or diamonds.

in fancying that he heard the voice of the nightingale, a bird unknown in these countries. He was, in fact, in a mood to see everything through a favoring medium. His heart was full to overflowing, for he was enjoying the fulfilment of his hopes, and the hard-earned but glorious reward of his toil and perils. Everything around him was beheld with the enamoured and exulting eye of a discoverer, where triumph mingles with admiration; and it is difficult to conceive the rapturous state of his feelings, while thus exploring the charms of a virgin world, won by his enterprise and valor.

From his continual remarks on the beauty of scenery, and from his evident delight in rural sounds and objects, he appears to have been extremely open to those happy influences, exercised over some spirits, by the grace and wonders of nature. He gives utterance to these feelings with characteristic enthusiasm, and at the same time with the artlessness and simplicity of diction of a child. When speaking of some lovely scene among the groves, or along the flowery shores of these favored islands, he says, "one could live there forever." Cuba broke upon him like an elysium. "It is the most beautiful island," he says, "that eyes ever beheld, full of excellent



The Berwick-Alba Portrait of Christopher Columbus

ports and profound rivers." The climate was more temperate here than in the other islands, the night being neither hot nor cold, while the birds and crickets sang all night long. Indeed, there is a beauty in the tropical night, in the depth of the dark-blue sky, the lambent purity of the stars, and the resplendent clearness of the moon, that spreads over the rich landscape and the balmy groves a charm more captivating than the splendor of the day.

In the sweet smell of the woods, and the odor of the flowers, Columbus fancied he perceived the fragrance of Oriental spices; and along the shores he found shells of a kind of oyster which produces pearls. From the grass growing to the very edge of the water, he inferred the peacefulness of the ocean which bathes these islands, never lashing the shores with angry surges. Ever since his arrival among these Antilles, he had experienced nothing but soft and gentle weather, and he concluded that a perpetual serenity reigned over these happy seas. He was little suspicious of the occasional bursts of fury to which they are liable. Charlevoix, speaking from actual observation, remarks:

"The sea of those islands is commonly more tranquil than ours; but, like certain people who are

excited with difficulty, and whose transports of passion are as violent as they are rare, so when the sea becomes irritated, it is terrible. It breaks all bounds, overflows the country, sweeps away all things that oppose it, and leaves frightful ravages behind to mark the extent of its inundations. It is after these tempests, known by the name of hurricanes, that the shores are covered with marine shells, which greatly surpass in lustre and beauty those of European seas."*

It is a singular fact, however, that the hurricanes, which almost annually devastate the Bahamas, and other islands in the immediate vicinity of Cuba, have been seldom known to extend their influence to this favored land. It would seem as if the very elements were charmed into gentleness as they approached it.

In a kind of riot of the imagination, Columbus finds at every step something to corroborate the information he had received, or fancied he had received, from the natives. He had conclusive proofs, as he thought, that Cuba possessed mines of gold, and groves of spices, and that its shores abounded with pearls. He no longer doubted that it was the island of Cipango, and weighing anchor, coasted along westward, in which direction, according to the signs of his interpreters, the

* Charlevoix, *Hist. St. Domingo*, lib. i., p. 20. Paris, 1730

magnificent city of its king was situated. In the course of his voyage, he landed occasionally, and visited several villages; particularly one on the banks of a large river, to which he gave the name of Rio de los Mares.* The houses were neatly built of branches of palm-leaves in the shape of pavilions; not laid out in regular streets, but scattered here and there, among the groves, and under the shades of broad spreading trees, like tents in a camp; as is still the case in many of the Spanish settlements, and in the villages in the interior of Cuba. The inhabitants fled to the mountains, or hid themselves in the woods. Columbus carefully noted the architecture and furniture of their dwellings. The houses were better built than those he had hitherto seen, and were kept extremely clean. He found in them rude statues, and wooden masks, carved with considerable ingenuity. All these were indications of more art and civilization than he had observed in the smaller islands, and he supposed they would go on increasing as he approached *terra firma*. Finding in all the cabins implements of fishing, he concluded that these coasts were inhabited merely by fishermen, who carried their fish to the cities in the interior. He thought also he had found

* Now called Savannah la Mer.

the skulls of cows, which proved that there were cattle in the island, though these are supposed to have been skulls of the manati or sea-calf, found on this coast.

After standing to the northwest for some distance, Columbus came in sight of a great headland, to which, from the groves with which it was covered, he gave the name of the Cape of Palms, and which forms the eastern entrance to what is now known as Laguna de Moron. Here three Indians, natives of the island of Guanahani, who were on board of the *Pinta*, informed the commander, Martin Alonzo Pinzon, that behind the cape there was a river, whence it was but four days' journey to Cubanacan, a place abounding in gold. By this they designated a province situated in the centre of Cuba; *nacan*, in their language, signifying the midst. Pinzon, however, had studied intently the map of Toscanelli, and had imbibed from Columbus all his ideas respecting the coast of Asia. He concluded, therefore, that the Indians were talking of Cublai Khan, the Tartar sovereign, and of certain parts of his dominions described by Marco Polo.* He understood from them that Cuba was not an island, but *terra firma*, extending a vast distance to the north, and that

* Las Casas, lib. i., cap. 54, MS.

the king who reigned in this vicinity was at war with the Great Khan.

This tissue of errors and misconceptions he immediately communicated to Columbus. It put an end to the delusion in which the Admiral had hitherto indulged, that this was the island of Cipango; but it substituted another no less agreeable. He concluded that he must have reached the mainland of Asia, or, as he termed it, India, and if so, he could not be at any great distance from Mangi and Cathay, the ultimate destination of his voyage. The prince in question, who reigned over this neighboring country, must be some Oriental potentate of consequence; he resolved, therefore, to seek the river beyond the Cape of Palms, and despatch a present to the monarch, with one of the letters of recommendation from the Castilian sovereigns; and after visiting his dominion, he would proceed to the capital of Cathay, the residence of the Grand Khan.

Every attempt to reach the river in question, however, proved ineffectual. Cape stretched beyond cape; there was no good anchorage; the wind became contrary, and the appearance of the heavens threatening rough weather, he put back to the Rio de los Mares.

On the 1st of November, at sunrise, he sent the boats on shore, to visit several houses, but

the inhabitants fled to the woods. He supposed they must have mistaken his armament for one of the scouring expeditions sent by the Grand Khan to make prisoners and slaves. He sent the boat on shore again in the afternoon, with an Indian interpreter, who was instructed to assure the people of the peaceable and beneficent intentions of the Spaniards, and that they had no connection with the Grand Khan. After the Indian had proclaimed this from the boat to the savages upon the beach, part of it, no doubt, to their great perplexity, he threw himself into the water and swam to shore. He was well received by the natives, and succeeded so effectually in calming their fears, that before evening there were more than sixteen canoes about the ships, bringing cotton yarn and other simple articles of traffic. Columbus forbade all trading for anything but gold, that the natives might be tempted to produce the real riches of their country. They had none to offer; all were destitute of ornaments of the precious metal, excepting one, who wore in his nose a piece of wrought silver. Columbus understood this man to say that the king lived about the distance of four days' journey in the interior; that many messengers had been despatched to give him tidings of the arrival of the strangers upon the

coast; and that in less than three days' time messengers might be expected from him in return, and many merchants from the interior, to trade with the ships. It is curious to observe how ingeniously the imagination of Columbus deceived him at every step, and how he wove everything into a uniform web of false conclusions. Poring over the map of Toscanelli, referring to the reckonings of his voyage, and musing on the misinterpreted words of the Indians, he imagined that he must be on the borders of Cathay, and about one hundred leagues from the capital of the Grand Khan. Anxious to arrive there, and to delay as little as possible in the territories of an inferior prince, he determined not to await the arrival of messengers and merchants, but to despatch two envoys to seek the neighboring monarch at his residence.

For this mission he chose two Spaniards, Rodrigo de Jerez and Luis de Torres; the latter a converted Jew, who knew Hebrew, and Chaldaic, and even something of the Arabic, one or other of which Columbus supposed might be known to this Oriental prince. Two Indians were sent with them as guides, one a native of Guanahani, and the other an inhabitant of the hamlet on the bank of the river. The ambassadors were furnished with strings

of beads and other trinkets for travelling expenses. Instructions were given them to inform the king that Columbus had been sent by the Castilian sovereigns, a bearer of letters and a present, which he was to deliver personally, for the purpose of establishing an amicable intercourse between the powers. They were likewise to inform themselves accurately about the situation and distances of certain provinces, ports, and rivers, which the Admiral specified by name from the descriptions which he had of the coast of Asia. They were moreover provided with specimens of spices and drugs, for the purpose of ascertaining whether any articles of the kind abounded in the country. With these provisions and instructions the ambassadors departed, six days being allowed them to go and return. Many, at the present day, will smile at this embassy to a naked savage chieftain in the interior of Cuba, in mistake for an Asiatic monarch; but such was the singular nature of this voyage, a continual series of golden dreams, and all interpreted by the deluding volume of Marco Polo.

Chapter IV.

FURTHER COASTING OF CUBA.

WHILE awaiting the return of his ambassadors the Admiral ordered the ships to be careened and repaired, and employed himself in collecting information concerning the country. On the day after their departure, he ascended the river in boats for the distance of two leagues, until he came to fresh water. Here landing, he climbed a hill to obtain a view of the interior. His view, however, was shut in by thick and lofty forests, wild but of beautiful luxuriance. Among the trees were some which he considered linaloes; many were odoriferous, and he doubted not possessed valuable aromatic qualities. There was a general eagerness among the voyagers to find the precious articles of commerce which grow in the favored climes of the East; and their

imaginations were continually deceived by their hopes.

For two or three days the Admiral was excited by reports of cinnamon-trees, and nutmegs, and rhubarb; but, on examination, they all proved fallacious. He showed the natives specimens of these and various other spices and drugs, and understood from them that those articles abounded to the southeast. He showed them gold and pearls also, and several old Indians spoke of a country where the natives wore ornaments of them round their necks, arms, and ankles. They repeatedly mentioned the word *Bohio* which Columbus supposed to be the name of the place in question, and that it was some rich district or island. They mingled, however, great extravagances with their imperfect accounts, describing nations at a distance who had but one eye; others who had the heads of dogs, and who were cannibals—cutting the throats of their prisoners and sucking their blood.*

All these reports of gold, and pearls, and spices, many of which were probably fabrications to please the Admiral, tended to keep up the persuasion that he was among the valuable coasts and islands of the East. On making a

* *Primer Viage de Colon*, Navarrete, lib. xxi., p. 48.

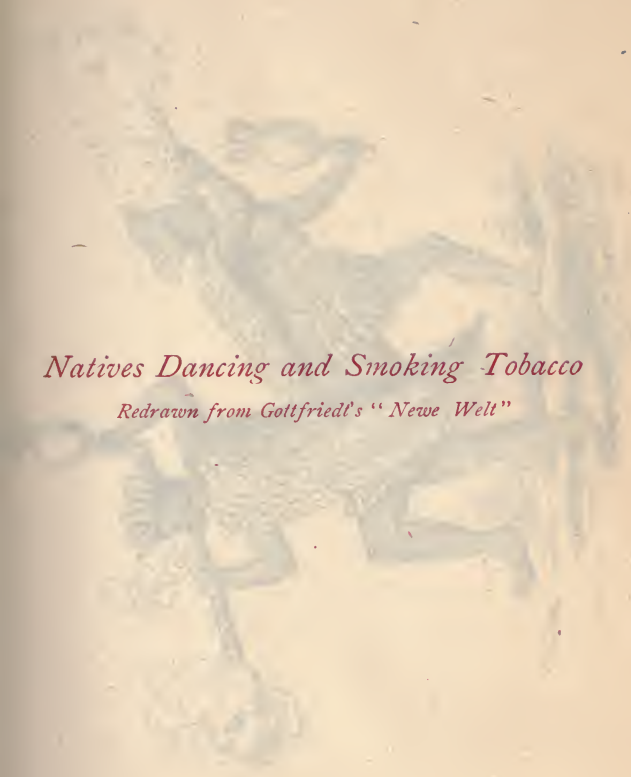
fire to heat the tar for careening the ships, the seamen found that the wood they burnt sent forth a powerful odor, and, on examining it, declared that it was mastic. The wood abounded in the neighboring forests, insomuch that Columbus flattered himself a thousand quintals of this precious gum might be collected every year, and a more abundant supply procured than that furnished by Scios, and other islands of the Archipelago. In the course of their researches in the vegetable kingdom, in quest of the luxuries of commerce, they met with the potato, a humble root, little valued at the time, but a more precious acquisition to man than all the spices of the East.

On the 6th of November the two ambassadors returned, and every one crowded to hear tidings of the interior of the country and of the prince to whose capital they had been sent. After penetrating twelve leagues, they had come to a village of fifty houses, built similarly to those of the coast, but larger; the whole village containing at least a thousand inhabitants. The natives received them with great solemnity, conducted them to the best houses, and placed them in what appeared to be intended for chairs of state, being wrought out of single pieces of wood into the forms of

quadrupeds. They then offered them fruits and vegetables. Having complied with the laws of savage courtesy and hospitality, they seated themselves on the ground around their visitors, and waited to hear what they had to communicate.

The Israelite, Luis de Torres, found his Hebrew, Chaldaic, and Arabic of no avail, and the Lucayen interpreter had to be the orator. He made a regular speech, after the Indian manner, in which he extolled the power, the wealth, and munificence of the white men. When he had finished, the Indians crowded round these wonderful beings, whom, as usual, they considered more than human. Some touched them, examining their skin and raiment, others kissed their hands and feet in token of submission or adoration. In a little while the men withdrew, and were succeeded by the women, and the same ceremonies were repeated. Some of the women had a slight covering of netted cotton round the middle, but in general both sexes were entirely naked. There seemed to be ranks and orders of society among them, and a chieftain of some authority; whereas among all the natives they had previously met with, a complete equality seemed to prevail.

There was no appearance of gold or other



Natives Dancing and Smoking Tobacco

Redrawn from Gottfriedt's "Newe Welt"

precious articles, and when they showed specimens of cinnamon, pepper, and other spices the inhabitants told them they were not to be found in that neighborhood, but far off to the southwest.

The envoys determined, therefore, to return to the ships. The natives would fain have induced them to remain for several days; but seeing them bent on departing, a great number were anxious to accompany them, imagining they were about to return to the skies. They took with them, however, only one of the principal men, with his son, who were attended by a domestic.

On their way back, they, for the first time, witnessed the use of a weed, which the ingenious caprice of man has since converted into a universal luxury, in defiance of the opposition of the senses. They beheld several of the natives going about with firebrands in their hands, and certain dried herbs which they rolled up in a leaf, and lighting one end, put the other in their mouths, and continued exhaling and puffing out the smoke. A roll of this kind they called a tobacco, a name since transferred to the plant of which the rolls were made. The Spaniards, although prepared to meet with wonders, were struck with astonish-

ment at this singular and apparently nauseous indulgence.*

On their return to the ships, they gave favorable accounts of the beauty and fertility of the country. They had met with many hamlets of four or five houses, well peopled, embowered among trees, laden with unknown fruits of tempting hue and delightful flavor. Around them were fields, cultivated with the agi or sweet pepper, potatoes, maize or Indian corn, a species of lupin or pulse, and yucca, whereof they made their cassava bread. These, with the fruits of the groves, formed their principal food. There were vast quantities of cotton, some just sown, some in full growth. There was a great store of it also in their houses, some wrought into yarn, or into nets, of which they made their hammocks. They had seen many birds of rare plumage, but unknown species; many ducks; several small partridges; and they heard the song of a bird which they had mistaken for the nightingale. All that they had seen, however, betokened

* *Primer Viage de Colon*, Navarrete, tom. i., p. 51.

"Hallaron por el camino mucha gente que atravesaban a sus pueblos mugeres y hombres: siempre los hombres con un tison en las manos y ciertos yerbas para tomar sus sahumerios, que son unas yerbas secas metidas en una cierta hoja seca tambien à manera de mosquete hecho de papel de los que hacon los mucha-

a primitive and simple state of society. The wonder with which they had been regarded, showed clearly that the people were strangers to civilized men, nor could they hear of any inland city superior to the one they had visited.

The report of the envoys put an end to many splendid fancies of Columbus, about the barbaric prince and his capital. He was cruising, however, in a region of enchantment, in which pleasing chimeras started up at every step, exercising by turns a power over his imagination. During the absence of the emissaries, the Indians had informed him, by signs, of a place to the eastward, where the people collected gold along the river banks by torchlight, and afterwards wrought it into bars with hammers. In speaking of this place they again used the words Babeque and Bohio, which he, as usual, supposed to be the proper names of islands or countries. The true meaning of these words has been variously explained. It is said that

chos la Pascua del Espiritu Santo, y encondido por una parte de el, por la otra chupan ó sorban ó reciben con el resuello por adentro aquel humo ; con el qual se adormecen la carnes y cuasi emborracho, y asi diz que no sienten el cassancio. Estos mosquetos, ó como los llamáremas, llamen ellos tabacos."—Las Casas, *Hist. Gen. Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 46.

they were applied by the Indians to the coast of *terra firma*, called also by them Caritaba.* It is also said that Bohio means a house, and was often used by the Indians to signify the populousness of an island. Hence it was frequently applied to Hispaniola as well as the more general name of Hayti, which means high land, and occasionally Quisqueya, (*i. e.*, the whole), on account of its extent.

The misapprehension of these, and other words, was a source of perpetual error to Columbus. Sometimes he supposed Babeque and Bohio to signify the same island; sometimes to be different places or islands; and Quisqueya he supposed to mean Quisai or Quinsai, (*i. e.*, the celestial city), mentioned by Marco Polo.

His great object was to arrive at some opulent and civilized country of the East, with which he might establish commercial relations, and whence he might carry home a quantity of Oriental merchandise as a rich trophy of his discovery. The season was advancing; the cool nights gave hints of approaching winter; he resolved, therefore, not to proceed farther to the north, nor to linger about uncivilized places, which, at present, he had not the means of colonizing, but to return to the east-southeast in quest of Babeque, which he trusted might

* Muñoz, *Hist. N. Mundo*, cap. 3.

prove some rich and civilized island on the coast of Asia.

Before leaving the river, to which he had given the name of Rio de los Mares, he took several of the natives to carry with him to Spain, for the purpose of teaching them the language, that, in future voyages, they might serve as interpreters. He took them of both sexes, having learned from the Portuguese discoverers that the men were always more contented on the voyage and serviceable on their return, when accompanied by females. With the religious feeling of the day he anticipated great triumphs to the Faith, and glory to the Crown, from the conversion of these savage nations, through the means of the natives thus instructed. He imagined that the Indians had no system of religion, but a disposition to receive its impressions; as they regarded with great reverence and attention the religious ceremonies of the Spaniards, soon repeating by rote any prayer taught them, and making the sign of the cross with the most edifying devotion. They had an idea of a future state, but limited and confused.

"They confess the soul to be immortal," says Peter Martyr, "and having put off the bodily clothing, they imagine it goes forth to the woods and the mountains, and that it liveth there perpetually in

caves; nor do they exempt it from eating and drinking, but that it should be fed there. The answering voices heard from caves and hollows, which the Latines call echoes, they suppose to be the souls of the departed, wandering through those places."*

From the natural tendency to devotion which Columbus thought he discovered among them, from their gentle natures, and their ignorance of all warlike arts, he pronounces it an easy matter to make them devout members of the Church, and loyal subjects of the Crown. He concludes his speculations upon the advantages to be derived from the colonization of these parts by anticipating a great trade for gold, which must abound in the interior; for pearls and precious stones, of which, though he had seen none, he had received frequent accounts; for gums and spices, of which he thought he found indubitable traces; and for the cotton, which grew wild in vast quantities. Many of these articles, he observes, would probably find a nearer market than Spain, in the ports and cities of the Great Khan, at which he had no doubt of soon arriving.†

* P. Martyr, decad. viii., cap. 9; M. Lock's translation, 1612.

† *Primer Viage de Colon*, Navarrete, tom. i.

Chapter V.

SEARCH AFTER THE SUPPOSED ISLAND OF BABEQUE —DESERTION OF THE "PINTA."

[1492.]

ON the 12th of November Columbus turned his course to the east-south-east, to follow back the direction of the coast. This may be considered another critical change in his voyage, which had a great effect upon his subsequent discoveries. He had proceeded far within what was called the old channel, between Cuba and the Bahamas. In two or three days more he would have discovered his mistake in supposing Cuba a part of *terra firma;* an error in which he continued to the day of his death. He might have had intimation also of the vicinity of the continent and have stood for the coast of Florida, or have been carried thither by the gulf stream, or, continuing

along Cuba where it bends to the southwest, might have struck over to the opposite coast of Yucatan, and have realized his most sanguine anticipations in becoming the discoverer of Mexico. It was sufficient glory for Columbus, however, to have discovered a new world. Its more golden regions were reserved to give splendor to succeeding enterprises.

He now ran along the coast for two or three days without stopping to explore it, as no populous towns or cities were to be seen. Passing by a great cape, to which he gave the name of Cape Cuba, he struck eastward in search of Babeque, but on the 14th a head-wind and boisterous sea obliged him to put back and anchor in a deep and secure harbor, to which he gave the name of Puerto del Principe. Here he erected a cross on a neighboring height, in token of possession. A few days were passed in exploring with his boats an archipelago of small but beautiful islands in the vicinity, since known as *El Jardin del Rey*, or The King's Garden. The gulf, studded with these islands, he named the sea of Nuestra Señora; in modern days it has been a lurking-place for pirates, who have found secure shelter and concealment among the channels and solitary harbors of this archipelago. These islands were covered with

noble trees, among which the Spaniards thought they discovered mastic and aloes.

On the 19th Columbus again put to sea, and for two days made ineffectual attempts, against head-winds, to reach an island directly east, about sixty miles distant, which he supposed to be Babeque. The wind continuing obstinately adverse and the sea rough, he put his ship about towards evening of the 20th, making signals for the other vessels to follow him. His signals were unattended to by the *Pinta* which was considerably to the eastward. Columbus repeated the signals, but they were still unattended to. Night coming on, he shortened sail and hoisted signal lights to the mast-head, thinking Pinzon would yet join him, which he could easily do having the wind astern; but when the morning dawned the *Pinta* was no longer to be seen.*

Columbus was disquieted by this circumstance. Pinzon was a veteran navigator, accustomed to hold a high rank among his nautical associates. The squadron had in a great measure been manned and fitted out through his influence and exertions; he could ill brook

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, tom. i., cap. 27. *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 29. *Journal of Columbus*, Navarrete, tom. i.

subordination therefore to Columbus, whom he perhaps did not consider his superior in skill and knowledge, and who had been benefited by his purse. Several misunderstandings and disputes had accordingly occurred between them in the course of the voyage, and when Columbus saw Pinzon thus parting company without any appointed rendezvous he suspected either that he intended to take upon himself a separate command and prosecute the enterprise in his own name, or hasten back to Spain and bear off the glory of the discovery. To attempt to seek him, however, was fruitless; he was far out of sight; his vessel was a superior sailer, and it was impossible to say what course he had steered. Columbus stood back, therefore, for Cuba, to finish the exploring of its coast; but he no longer possessed his usual serenity of mind and unity of purpose, and was embarrassed in the prosecution of his discoveries by doubts of the designs of Pinzon.

Columbus continued for several days coasting the residue of Cuba, extolling the magnificence, freshness, and verdure of the scenery, the purity of the rivers and the number and commodiousness of the harbors. Speaking in his letters to the sovereigns, of one place, to which he gave the name of Puerto Santo, he says, in his artless but enthusiastic language:

"The amenity of this river, and the clearness of the water, through which the sand at the bottom may be seen, the multitude of palm-trees of various forms, the highest and most beautiful that I have ever met with, and an infinity of other great and green trees; the birds in rich plumage and the verdure of the fields, render this country, most serene princes, of such marvellous beauty that it surpasses all others in charms and graces as the day doth the night in lustre. For which reason I often say to my people, that, much as I endeavor to give a complete account of it to your Majesties, my tongue cannot express the whole truth, nor my pen describe it; and I have been so overwhelmed at the sight of so much beauty, that I have not known how to relate it." *

The transparency of the water, which Columbus attributed to the purity of the rivers, is the property of the ocean in these latitudes. So clear is the sea in the neighborhood of some of these islands that in still weather the bottom may be seen, as in a crystal fountain; and the inhabitants dive down four or five fathoms in search of conches and other shell-fish, which are visible from the surface. The delicate air and pure waters of these islands are among their greatest charms.

As a proof of the gigantic vegetation, Columbus mentions the enormous size of the

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 29.

canoes formed from single trunks of trees. One that he saw was capable of containing one hundred and fifty persons. Among other articles found in the Indian dwellings was a cake of wax, which he took to present to the Castilian sovereigns, "for where there is wax," said he, "there must be a thousand other good things."* It is since supposed to have been brought from Yucatan, as the inhabitants of Cuba were not accustomed to gather wax.†

On the 5th of December he reached the eastern end of Cuba, which he supposed to be the eastern extremity of Asia; he gave it, therefore, the name of Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. He was now greatly perplexed what course to take. If he kept along the coast as it bent to the southwest, it might bring him to the more civilized and opulent parts of India; but if he took this course, he must abandon all hope of finding the island of Babeque, which the Indians now said lay to the northeast, and of which they still continued to give the most marvellous accounts. It was a state of embarrassment characteristic of this extraordinary voyage, to have a new and unknown world thus spread out

* *Journal of Columbus*, Navarrete, tom. i.

† Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, decad. i.

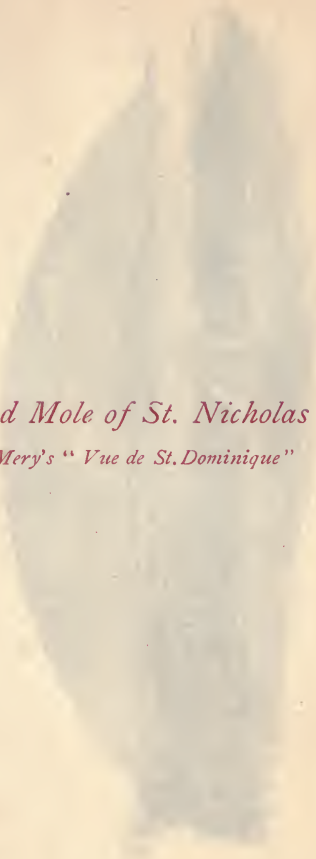
to the choice of the explorer, where wonders and beauties invited him on every side; but where, whichever way he turned, he might leave the true region of profit and delight behind.

Chapter VII.

DISCOVERY OF HISPANIOLA.

[1492.]

WHILE Columbus was steering at large beyond the eastern extremity of Cuba, undetermined what course to take, he descried land to the southeast, gradually increasing upon the view; its high mountains towering above the clear horizon, and giving evidence of an island of great extent. The Indians on beholding it exclaimed *Bohio*, the name by which Columbus understood them to designate some country which abounded in gold. When they saw him standing in that direction they showed great signs of terror, imploring him not to visit it, assuring him by signs that the inhabitants were fierce and cruel, that they had but one eye, and were cannibals. The wind being



Cape and Mole of St. Nicholas

From St. Mery's "Vue de St. Dominique"

unfavorable and the nights long, during which they did not dare to make sail in these unknown seas, they were a great part of two days working up to the island.

In the transparent atmosphere of the tropics, objects are descried at a great distance and the purity of the air and serenity of the deep blue sky give a magical effect to the scenery. Under these advantages the beautiful island of Hayti revealed itself to the eye as they approached. Its mountains were higher and more rocky than those of the other islands; but the rocks rose from among rich forests. The mountains swept down into luxuriant plains and green savannas; while the appearance of cultivated fields, of numerous fires at night, and columns of smoke by day, showed it to be populous. It rose before them in all the splendor of tropical vegetation, one of the most beautiful islands in the world and doomed to be one of the most unfortunate.

In the evening of the 6th of December, Columbus entered a harbor at the western end of the island, to which he gave the name of St. Nicholas, by which it is called at the present day. The harbor was spacious and deep, surrounded with large trees, many of them loaded with fruit; while a beautiful plain extended in front of the port, traversed by a

fine stream of water. From the number of canoes seen in various parts, there were evidently large villages in the neighborhood, but the natives fled with terror at sight of the ships.

Leaving the harbor of St. Nicholas on the 7th, they coasted along the northern side of the island. It was lofty and mountainous, but with green savannas and long sweeping plains. At one place they caught a view of a rich and smiling valley that ran far into the interior, between two mountains, and appeared to be in a high state of cultivation.

For several days they were detained in a harbor which they called Port Conception ;* a small river emptied into it, after winding through a delightful country. The coast abounded with fish, some of which even leaped into their boats. They cast their nets therefore and caught great quantities, and among them several kinds similar to those

* Now known by the name of the Bay of Moustique.

NOTE.—The author has received very obliging and interesting letters, dated in 1847, from T. S. Heneken, Esq., many years a resident of St. Domingo, giving names, localities, and other particulars connected with the transactions of Columbus in that island. These will be thankfully made use of and duly cited in the course of the work.

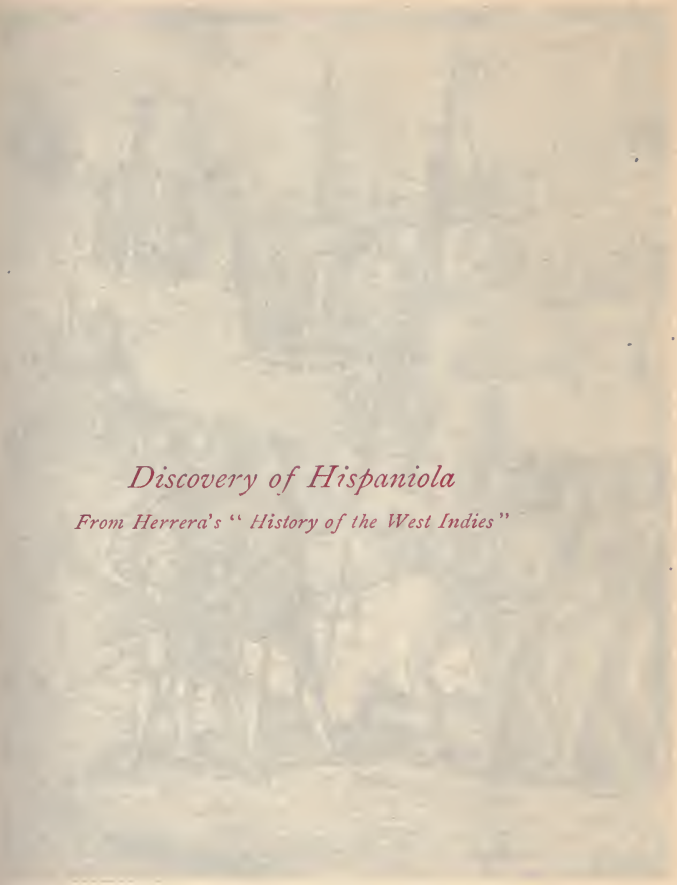
of Spain,—the first fish they had met with resembling those of their own country. The notes of the bird which they mistook for the nightingale and several others to which they were accustomed reminded them strongly of the groves of their distant Andalusia. They fancied the features of the surrounding country resembled those of the more beautiful provinces of Spain, and in consequence the Admiral named the island Hispaniola.

Desirous of establishing some intercourse with the natives, who had abandoned the coast on his arrival, he despatched six men, well armed, into the interior. They found several cultivated fields, and traces of roads, and places where fires had been made, but the inhabitants had fled with terror to the mountains.

Though the whole country was solitary and deserted, Columbus consoled himself with the idea that there must be populous towns in the interior, where the people had taken refuge, and that the fires he had beheld had been signal fires, like those lighted up on the mountains of Spain, in the times of Moorish war, to give the alarm when there was any invasion of the seaboard.

On the 12th of December Columbus with great solemnity erected a cross on a command-

ing eminence at the entrance of the harbor, in sign of having taken possession. As three sailors were rambling about the vicinity they beheld a large number of the natives, who immediately took flight; but the sailors pursued them and captured a young female, whom they brought to the ships. She was perfectly naked; a bad omen as to the civilization of the island; but an ornament of gold in the nose gave hope of the precious metal. The Admiral soon soothed her terror by his kindness, and by presents of beads, brass rings, hawks'-bells, and other trinkets, and, having had her clothed, sent her on shore accompanied by several of the crew and three of the Indian interpreters. So well pleased was she with her finery, and with the kind treatment she had experienced, that she would gladly have remained with the Indian women whom she found on board. The party sent with her returned on board late in the night, without venturing to her village, which was far inland. Confident of the favorable impression which the report of the woman must produce, the Admiral, on the following day, despatched nine stout-hearted, well-armed men, to seek the village, accompanied by a native of Cuba as an interpreter. They found it about four and a half leagues to the southeast, in a fine valley,



Discovery of Hispaniola

From Herrera's "History of the West Indies"

on the banks of a beautiful river.* It contained one thousand houses, but the inhabitants fled as they approached. The interpreter overtook them, and assured them of the goodness of these strangers, who had descended from the skies, and went about the world making precious and beautiful presents. Thus assured, the natives ventured back, to the number of two thousand. They approached the Spaniards with slow and trembling steps, often pausing, and putting their hands upon their heads in token of profound reverence and submission. They were a well-formed race, fairer and handsomer than the natives of the other islands.† While the Spaniards were conversing with them by means of their interpreter, another multitude approached, headed by the husband of the female captive. They brought her in triumph on their shoulders and the husband was profuse in his gratitude for the kindness with which she had been treated and the magnificent presents which had been bestowed upon her.

The Indians now conducted the Spaniards

* This village was formerly known by the name of Gros Morne, situated on the banks of the river of "Trois Rivieres," which empties itself half a mile west of Port de Paix. Navarrete, tom. i.

† Las Casas, lib. i., cap. 53, MS.

to their houses, and set before them cassava bread, fish, roots, and fruits of various kinds. They brought also great numbers of domesticated parrots, and indeed offered freely whatever they possessed. The great river flowing through this valley was bordered with noble forests, among which were palms, bananas, and many trees covered with fruits and flowers. The air was as mild as in April; the birds sang all day long, and some were even heard in the night. The Spaniards had not learned as yet to account for the difference of seasons in this opposite part of the globe; they were astonished to hear the voice of this supposed nightingale singing in the midst of December and considered it a proof that there was no winter in this happy climate. They returned to the ships enraptured with the beauty of the country; surpassing, as they said, even the luxuriant plains of Cordova. All that they complained of was, that they saw no signs of riches among the natives. And here it is impossible to refrain from dwelling on the picture given by the first discoverers, of the state of manners in this eventful island before the arrival of the white men. According to their accounts, the people of Hayti existed in that state of primitive and savage simplicity, which some philosophers

have fondly pictured as the most enviable on earth; surrounded by natural blessings, without even a knowledge of artificial wants. The fertile earth produced the chief part of their food almost without culture; their rivers and sea-coast abounded with fish, and they caught the utia, the guana, and a variety of birds. This, to beings of their frugal and temperate habits, was great abundance, and what nature furnished thus spontaneously, they willingly shared with all the world. Hospitality, we are told, was with them a law of nature universally observed; there was no need of being known to receive its succors; every house was as open to the stranger as his own.* Columbus, too, in a letter to Luis de St. Angel, observes:

"True it is, that after they felt confidence and lost their fear of us, they were so liberal with what they possessed that it would not be believed by those who had not seen it. If anything was asked of them, they never said no, but rather gave it cheerfully and showed as much amity as if they gave their very hearts; and whether the thing were of value, or of little price, they were content with whatever was given in return. . . . In all these islands it appears to me that the men are all content with one wife, but they give twenty to their chieftain or king. The women seem to work more than the men, and

* Charlevoix, *Hist. St. Domingo*, lib. i.

I have not been able to understand whether they possess individual property; but rather think that whatever one has all the rest share, especially in all articles of provisions."*

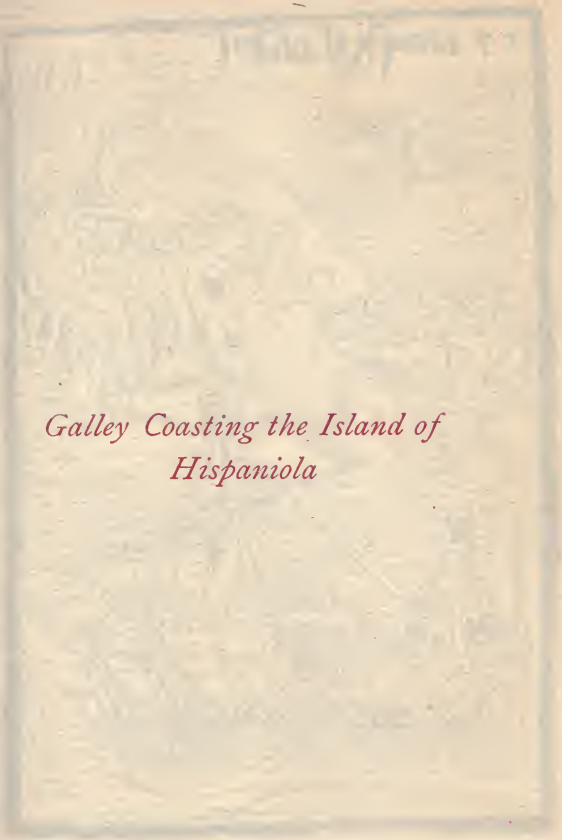
One of the most pleasing descriptions of the inhabitants of this island is given by old Peter Martyr, who gathered it, as he says, from the conversations of the Admiral himself.

"It is certain," says he, "that the land among these people is as common as the sun and water; and that 'mine and thine,' the seeds of all mischief, have no place with them. They are content with so little, that in so large a country they have rather superfluity than scarceness; so that they seem to live in the golden world, without toil, living in open gardens; not intrenched with dykes, divided with hedges, or defended with walls. They deal truly one with another, without laws, without books, and without judges. They take him for an evil and mischievous man, who taketh pleasure in doing hurt to another; and albeit they delight not in superfluities, yet they make provision for the increase of such roots whereof they make their bread, contented with such simple diet, whereby health is preserved and disease avoided." †

Much of this picture may be overcolored by the imagination, but it is generally confirmed

* *Letter of Columbus to Luis de St. Angel*, Navarrete, tom. i., p. 167.

† P. Martyr, decad. i., lib. iii.; Transl. of Richard Eden, 1555.



Galley Coasting the Island of Hispaniola

Insula hyspana

by contemporary historians. They all concur in representing the life of these islanders as approaching to the golden state of poetical felicity ; living under the absolute but patriarchal and easy rule of their *caciques*, free from pride, with few wants, an abundant country, a happily-tempered climate, and a natural disposition to careless and indolent enjoyment.

Chapter VIII.

COASTING OFF HISPANIOLA.

[1492.]

WHEN the weather became favorable, Columbus made another attempt, on the 14th of December, to find the island of Babeque, but was again baffled by adverse winds. In the course of this attempt, he visited an island lying opposite to the harbor of Conception, to which, from its abounding in turtle, he gave the name of Tortugas.* The natives had fled to the rocks and forests, and alarm fires blazed along the heights. The country was so beautiful that he gave to one of the valleys the name of Valle de Paraiso, or the Vale of Paradise, and called a fine stream the Guadalquiver, after

* This island in after times became the headquarters of the famous buccaneers.

that renowned river which flows through some of the fairest provinces of Spain.*

Setting sail on the 16th of December at midnight, Columbus steered again for Hispaniola. When half way across the gulf which separates the islands he perceived a canoe navigated by a single Indian, and, as on a former occasion, was astonished at his hardihood in venturing so far from land in so frail a bark, and at his adroitness in keeping it above water, as the wind was fresh and there was some sea running. He ordered both him and his canoe to be taken on board; and having anchored near a village on the coast of Hispaniola, at present known as Puerto de Paz, he sent him on shore well regaled and enriched with various presents.

In the early intercourse with these people, kindness never seems to have failed in its effect. The favorable accounts given by this Indian, and by those with whom the Spaniards had communicated in their previous landings, dispelled the fears of the islanders. A friendly intercourse soon took place, and the ships were visited by a cacique of the neighborhood. From this chieftain and his counsellors Columbus had further information of the island of Babeque,

* *Journal of Columbus*, Navarrete, *Colec.*, tom. i., p. 91.

which was described as lying at no great distance. No mention is afterwards made of this island, nor does it appear that he made any further attempt to seek it. No such island exists in the ancient charts, and it is probable that this was one of the numerous misinterpretations of Indian words, which led the first discoverers into so many fruitless researches. The people of Hispaniola appeared handsomer to Columbus than any he had yet met with, and of a gentle and peaceable disposition. Some of them had ornaments of gold, which they readily gave away or exchanged for any trifle. The country was finely diversified with lofty mountains and green valleys, which stretched away inland as far as the eye could reach. The mountains were of such easy ascent, that the highest of them might be ploughed with oxen, and the luxuriant growth of the forest manifested the fertility of the soil. The valleys were watered by numerous clear and beautiful streams; they appeared to be cultivated in many places, and to be fitted for grain, for orchards and pasturage.

While detained at this harbor by contrary winds, Columbus was visited by a young cacique, who came borne by four men on a sort of litter, and attended by two hundred of his subjects. The Admiral being at dinner when

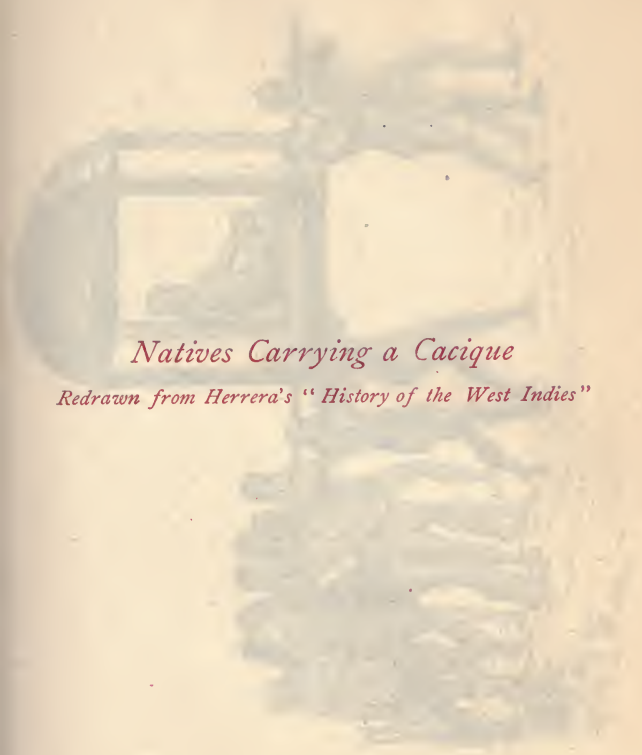
he arrived, the young chieftain ordered his followers to remain without, and entering the cabin, took his seat beside Columbus, not permitting him to rise or use any ceremony. Only two old men entered with him, who appeared to be his counsellors, and who seated themselves at his feet. If anything were given him to eat or drink, he merely tasted it, and sent it to his followers, maintaining an air of great gravity and dignity. He spoke but little, his two counsellors watching his lips, and catching and communicating his ideas. After dinner he presented the Admiral with a belt curiously wrought, and two pieces of gold. Columbus gave him a piece of cloth, several amber beads, colored shoes, and a flask of orange-flower water; he showed him a Spanish coin, on which were the likenesses of the King and Queen, and endeavored to explain to him the power and grandeur of those sovereigns; he displayed, also, the royal banners and the standard of the cross; but it was all in vain to attempt to convey any clear idea by these symbols; the cacique could not be made to believe that there was a region on the earth which produced these wonderful people and wonderful things; he joined in the common idea that the Spaniards were more than mortal, and that the country and sovereigns

they talked of must exist somewhere in the skies.

In the evening the cacique was sent on shore in the boat with great ceremony, and a salute fired in honor of him. He departed in the state in which he had come, carried on a litter, accompanied by a great concourse of his subjects; not far behind him was his son, borne and escorted in like manner, and his brother on foot, supported by two attendants. The presents which he had received from the Admiral were carried triumphantly before him.

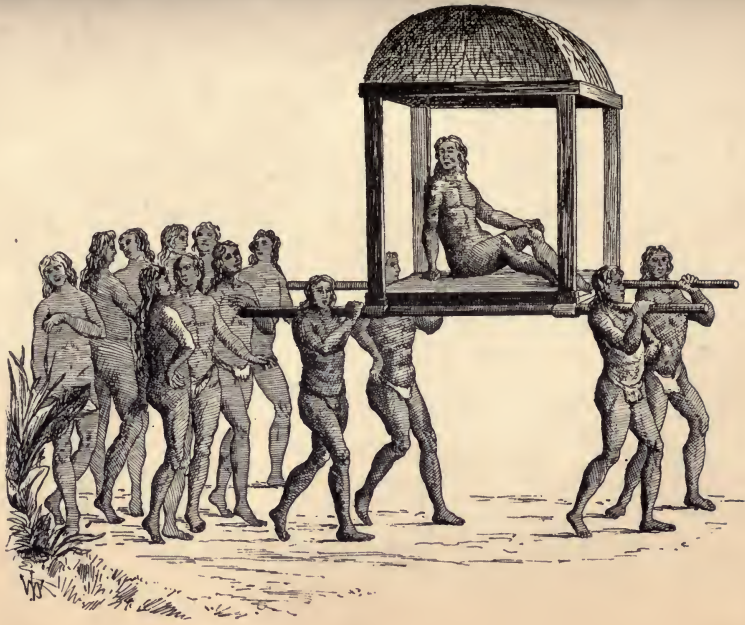
They procured but little gold in this place, though whatever ornaments the natives possessed they readily gave away. The region of promise lay still farther on, and one of the old counsellors of the cacique told Columbus that he would soon arrive at islands rich in the precious ore. Before leaving this place, the Admiral caused a large cross to be erected in the centre of the village, and from the readiness with which the Indians assisted, and their implicit imitation of the Spaniards in their acts of devotion, he inferred that it would be an easy matter to convert them all to Christianity.

On the 19th of December they made sail before daylight, but with an unfavorable wind, and on the evening of the 20th they anchored



Natives Carrying a Cacique

Redrawn from Herrera's "History of the West Indies"



in a fine harbor, to which Columbus gave the name of St. Thomas, supposed to be what at present is called the Bay of Acùl. It was surrounded by a beautiful and well-peopled country. The inhabitants came off, some in canoes, some swimming, bringing fruits of various unknown kinds, of great fragrance and flavor. These they gave freely, with whatever else they possessed, especially their golden ornaments, which they saw were particularly coveted by the strangers. There was a remarkable frankness and generosity about these people; they had no idea of traffic, but gave away everything with spontaneous liberality. Columbus would not permit his people, however, to take advantage of this free disposition but ordered that something should always be given in exchange. Several of the neighboring caciques visited the ships, bringing presents, and inviting the Spaniards to their villages, where, on going to land, they were most hospitably entertained.

On the 22d of December a large canoe filled with natives came on a mission from a grand cacique named Guacanagari, who commanded all that part of the island. A principal servant of the chieftain came in the canoe, bringing the Admiral a present of a broad belt, wrought ingeniously with colored beads

and bones, and a wooden mask, the eyes, nose, and tongue of which were of gold. He delivered also a message from the Cacique, begging that the ships might come opposite to his residence, which was on a part of the coast a little farther to the eastward. The wind preventing an immediate compliance with this invitation, the Admiral sent the notary of the squadron, with several of the crew, to visit the Cacique. He resided in a town situated on a river, at what they called Punta Santa, at present Grande Riviere. It was the largest and best built town they had yet seen. The Cacique received them in a kind of public square, which had been swept and prepared for the occasion, and treated them with great honor, giving to each a dress of cotton. The inhabitants crowded around them, bringing provisions and refreshments of various kinds. The seamen were received into their houses as distinguished guests; they gave them garments of cotton, and whatever else appeared to have value in their eyes, asking nothing in return, but if anything were given, appearing to treasure it up as a sacred relic.

The Cacique would have detained them all night, but their orders obliged them to return. On parting with them, he gave them presents of parrots and pieces of gold for the Admiral,

and they were attended to their boats by a crowd of the natives, carrying the presents for them, and vying with each other in rendering them service.

During their absence the Admiral had been visited by a great number of canoes and several inferior caciques: all assured him that the island abounded with wealth; they talked, especially, of Cibao, a region in the interior, farther to the east, the cacique of which, as far as they could be understood, had banners of wrought gold. Columbus, deceiving himself as usual, fancied that this name Cibao must be a corruption of Cipango, and that this chieftain with golden banners must be identical with the magnificent prince of that island, mentioned by Marco Polo.[1]

[1] *Journal of Columbus*, Navarrete, *Colec.*, tom. i. *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 22. Herrera, decad. i., lib. i., cap. 15, 16.

Chapter VIII.

SHIPWRECK.

[1492.]

ON the morning of the 24th of December Columbus set sail from Port St. Thomas before sunrise, and steered to the eastward, with an intention of anchoring at the harbor of the Cacique Guacanagari. The wind was from the land, but so light as scarcely to fill the sails, and the ships made but little progress. At eleven o'clock at night, being Christmas Eve, they were within a league or a league and a half of the residence of the Cacique; and Columbus, who had hitherto kept watch, finding the sea calm and smooth and the ship almost motionless, retired to rest, not having slept the preceding night. He was in general extremely wakeful on his coasting voyages, passing whole nights upon deck in all weathers, never trusting to the watchful-

ness of others where there was any difficulty or danger to be provided against. In the present instance he felt perfectly secure; not merely on account of the profound calm, but because the boats on the preceding day in their visit to the Cacique had reconnoitred the coast, and had reported that there were neither rocks nor shoals in their course.

No sooner had he retired than the steersman gave the helm in charge to one of the ship-boys, and went to sleep. This was in direct violation of an invariable order of the Admiral, that the helm should never be intrusted to the boys. The rest of the mariners who had the watch took like advantage of the absence of Columbus, and in a little while the whole crew was buried in sleep. In the meantime the treacherous currents which run swiftly along this coast carried the vessel quietly, but with force, upon a sand-bank. The heedless boy had not noticed the breakers, although they made a roaring that might have been heard a league. No sooner, however, did he feel the rudder strike and hear the tumult of the rushing sea than he began to cry for aid. Columbus, whose careful thoughts never permitted him to sleep profoundly, was the first on deck. The master of the ship, whose duty it was to have been on watch, next made his appear-

ance, followed by others of the crew, half-awake. The Admiral ordered them to take the boat and carry out an anchor astern, to ward the vessel off. The master and the sailors sprang into the boat; but, confused, as men are apt to be when suddenly awakened by an alarm, instead of obeying the commands of Columbus they rowed off to the other caravel, about half a league to windward.

In the meantime the master had reached the caravel and made known the perilous state in which he had left the vessel. He was reproached with his pusillanimous desertion; the commander of the caravel manned his boat and hastened to the relief of the Admiral, followed by the recreant master covered with shame and confusion.

It was too late to save the ship, the current having set her more upon the bank. The Admiral, seeing that his boat had deserted him, that the ship had swung across the stream, and that the water was continually gaining upon her, ordered the mast to be cut away, in the hope of lightening her sufficiently to float her off. Every effort was in vain. The keel was firmly bedded in the sand, the shock had opened several seams, while the swell of the breakers, striking her broadside, left her each moment more and more aground, until

she fell over on one side. Fortunately the weather continued calm, otherwise the ship must have gone to pieces, and the whole crew might have perished amidst the currents and breakers.

The Admiral and his men took refuge on board the caravel. Diego de Arana, chief judge of the armament, and Pedro Gutierrez, the King's butler, were immediately sent on shore as envoys to the Cacique Guacanagari to inform him of the intended visit of the Admiral, and of his disastrous shipwreck. In the meantime, as a light wind had sprung up from shore and the Admiral was ignorant of his situation and of the rocks and banks that might be lurking around him, he lay to until daylight.

The habitation of the Cacique was about a league and a half from the wreck. When he heard of the misfortune of his guest, he manifested the utmost affliction, and even shed tears. He immediately sent all his people, with all the canoes, large and small, that could be mustered; and so active were they in their assistance, that in a little while the vessel was unloaded. The Cacique himself, and his brothers and relatives, rendered all the aid in their power, both on sea and land, keeping vigilant guard that everything should be conducted

with order, and the property secured from injury or theft. From time to time he sent some one of his family, or some principal person of his attendants, to console and cheer the Admiral, assuring him that everything he possessed should be at his disposal.

Never, in a civilized country, were the vaunted rites of hospitality more scrupulously observed than by this uncultivated savage. All the effects landed from the ships were deposited near his dwelling; and an armed guard surrounded them at night until houses could be prepared in which to store them. There seemed, however, even among the common people, no disposition to take advantage of the misfortune of the stranger. Although they beheld what must in their eyes have been inestimable treasures, cast, as it were, upon their shores, and open to depredation, yet there was not the least attempt to pilfer, nor in transporting the effects from the ships had they appropriated the most trifling article. On the contrary, a general sympathy was visible in their countenances and actions; and to have witnessed their concern, one would have supposed the misfortune to have happened to themselves.*

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 32. Las Casas, lib. i., cap. 9.

"So loving, so tractable, so peaceable are these people," says Columbus, in his journal, "that I swear to your Majesties, there is not in the world a better nation, nor a better land. They love their neighbors as themselves, and their discourse is ever sweet and gentle and accompanied with a smile; and though it is true that they are naked, yet their manners are decorous and praiseworthy."

Chapter IX.

TRANSACTIONS WITH THE NATIVES.

[1492.]

ON the 26th of December Guacanagari came on board of the caravel *Niña*, to visit the Admiral, and observing him to be very much dejected, was moved to tears. He repeated the message which he had sent, entreating Columbus not to be cast down by his misfortune, and offering everything he possessed, that might render him aid or consolation. He had already given three houses to shelter the Spaniards, and to receive the effects landed from the wreck, and he offered to furnish more if necessary.

While they were conversing a canoe arrived from another part of the island, bringing pieces of gold to be exchanged for hawks'-bells. There was nothing upon which the natives set so much value as upon these toys. The

Indians were extravagantly fond of the dance, which they performed to the cadence of certain songs, accompanied by the sound of a kind of drum, made from the trunk of a tree, and the

NATIVES DANCING.

rattling of hollow bits of wood ; but when they hung the hawks'-bells about their persons, and heard the clear musical sound re-

sponding to the movements of the dance, nothing could exceed their wild delight.

The sailors who came from the shore informed the Admiral that considerable quantities of gold had been brought to barter, and large pieces were eagerly given for the merest trifle. This information had a cheering effect upon Columbus. The attentive Cacique, perceiving the lighting up of his countenance, asked what the sailors had communicated. When he learnt its purport, and found that the Admiral was extremely desirous of procuring gold, he assured him by signs, that there was a place not far off, amongst the mountains, where it abounded to such a degree as to be held in little value, and promised to procure him thence as much as he desired. The place to which he alluded, and which he called Cibao, was in fact a mountainous region afterward found to contain valuable mines; but Columbus still confounded the name with that of Cipango.*

Guacanagari dined on board of the caravel with the Admiral, after which he invited him to visit his residence. Here he had prepared a collation, as choice and abundant as his simple means afforded, consisting of utia, or

* *Primer Viage de Colon*, Navarrete, tom. i., p. 114.

coneys, fish, roots, and various fruits. He did everything in his power to honor his guest, and cheer him under his misfortune, showing a warmth of sympathy yet delicacy of attention, which could not have been expected from his savage state. Indeed, there was a degree of innate dignity and refinement displayed in his manners, that often surprised the Spaniards. He was remarkably nice and decorous in his mode of eating, which was slow and with moderation, washing his hands when he had finished, and rubbing them with sweet and odoriferous herbs, which Columbus supposed was done to preserve their delicacy and softness. He was served with great deference by his subjects, and conducted himself towards them with a gracious and prince-like majesty. His whole deportment, in the enthusiastic eyes of Columbus, betokened the inborn grace and dignity of lofty lineage.*

In fact, the sovereignty among the people of this island was hereditary, and they had a simple but sagacious mode of maintaining, in some degree, the verity of descent. On the death of a cacique without children, his authority passed to those of his sisters, in preference to those of his brothers, being considered

* Las Casas, lib. i., cap. 70, MS. *Primer Viage de Colon*, Navarrete, tom. i., p. 114.

most likely to be of his blood; for they observed, that a brother's reputed children may by accident have no consanguinity with their uncle; but those of his sister must certainly be the children of their mother. The form of government was completely despotic; the caciques had entire control over the lives, the property, and even the religion of their subjects. They had few laws, and ruled according to their judgment and their will; but they ruled mildly, and were implicitly and cheerfully obeyed. Throughout the course of the disastrous history of these islanders, after their discovery by the Europeans, there are continual proofs of their affectionate and devoted fidelity to their caciques.

After the collation, Guacanagari conducted Columbus to the beautiful groves which surrounded his residence. They were attended by upwards of a thousand of the natives, all perfectly naked, who performed several national games and dances, which Guacanagari had ordered, to amuse the melancholy of his guest.

When the Indians had finished their games, Columbus gave them an entertainment in return, calculated at the same time to impress them with the formidable idea of the military power of the Spaniards. He sent on board

the caravel for a Moorish bow and a quiver of arrows, and a Castilian who had served in the wars of Granada, and was skilful in the use of them. When the Cacique beheld the accuracy with which this man used his weapons, he was greatly surprised, being himself of an unwarlike character, and little accustomed to the use of arms. He told the Admiral that the Caribs, who often made descents upon his territory, and carried off his subjects, were likewise armed with bows and arrows. Columbus assured him of the protection of the Castilian monarch, who would destroy the Caribs, for he let him know that he had weapons far more tremendous, against which there was no defence. In proof of this, he ordered a Lombard or heavy cannon, and an arquebus, to be discharged.

On hearing the report the Indians fell to the ground, as though they had been struck by a thunderbolt; and when they saw the effect of the ball, rending and shivering the trees like a stroke of lightning, they were filled with dismay. Being told, however, that the Spaniards would defend them with these arms against their dreaded enemies the Caribs, their alarm was changed to exultation, considering themselves under the protection of the sons of Heaven, who had come from the skies armed with thunder and lightning.

The Cacique now presented Columbus with a mask carved of wood, with the eyes, ears, and the various other parts of gold; he hung plates of the same metal round his neck, and placed a kind of golden coronet upon his head. He dispensed presents also among the followers of the Admiral, acquitting himself in all things with a munificence that would have done honor to an accomplished prince in civilized life.

Whatever trifles Columbus gave in return were regarded with reverence as celestial gifts. The Indians, in admiring the articles of European manufacture, continually repeated the word "*turey*," which in their language signifies heaven. They pretended to distinguish the different qualities of gold by the smell. In the same way, when any article of tin, of silver, or other white metal was given them, to which they were unaccustomed, they smelt it, and declared it *turey*, of excellent quality, giving in exchange pieces of the finest gold. Everything, in fact, from the hands of the Spaniards, even a rusty piece of iron, an end of a strap, or a head of a nail, had an occult and supernatural value, and smelt of *turey*. Hawks'-bells, however, were sought by them with a mania only equalled by that of the Spaniards for gold. They could not contain

their ecstacies at the sound, dancing and playing a thousand antics. On one occasion an Indian gave half a handful of gold-dust in exchange for one of these toys, and no sooner was he in possession of it than he bounded away to the woods, looking often behind him, fearing the Spaniards might repent of having parted so cheaply with such an inestimable jewel.*

The extreme kindness of the Cacique, the gentleness of his people, the quantities of gold which were daily brought to be exchanged for the veriest trifles, and the information continually received of sources of wealth in the interior of this island, all contributed to console the Admiral for his misfortune.

The shipwrecked crew, also, became fascinated with their easy and idle mode of life. Exempted by their simplicity from the cares and toils which civilized man inflicts upon himself by his many artificial wants, the existence of these islanders seemed to the Spaniards like a pleasant dream. They disquieted themselves about nothing. A few fields, cultivated almost without labor, furnished the roots and vegetables which formed a great part of their diet. Their rivers and coasts abounded with fish; their trees were laden with fruits of

* Las Casas, lib. i., cap. 70, MS.

golden or blushing hue, and heightened by a tropical sun to delicious flavor and fragrance. Softened by the indulgence of nature and by a voluptuous climate, a great part of their day was passed in indolent repose, and in the evenings they danced in their fragrant groves, to their national songs, or the sound of their sylvan drums.

Such was the indolent and holiday life of these simple people, which, if it had not the great scope of enjoyment nor the high-seasoned poignancy of pleasure which attend civilization, was certainly destitute of most of its artificial miseries. The venerable Las Casas, speaking of their perfect nakedness, observes, it seemed almost as if they were existing in the state of primeval innocence of our first parents, before their fall brought sin into the world. He might have added, that they seemed exempt likewise from the penalty inflicted on the children of Adam, that they should eat their bread by the sweat of their brow.

When the Spanish mariners looked back upon their own toilsome and painful life, and reflected on the cares and hardships that must still be their lot if they returned to Europe, it is no wonder that they regarded with a wistful eye the easy and idle existence of these Indians. Wherever they went they met

upon the mind an impression of vastness, fertility, and beauty.

The fort of La Navidad must have been erected near Haut du Cap, as it could be approached in boats by rowing up the river, and there is no other river in the vicinity that admits a passage for boats.

The locality of the town of Guacanagari has always been known by the name of Guarico. The French first settled at Petit Anse; subsequently they removed to the opposite side of the bay and founded the town of Cape François, now Cape Haytien; but the old Indian name Guarico continues in use among all the Spanish inhabitants of the vicinity.

Chapter X.

BUILDING OF THE FORTRESS OF LA NAVIDAD.

[1492.]

THE solicitude expressed by many of his people to be left behind, added to the friendly and pacific character of the natives, now suggested to Columbus the idea of forming the germ of a future colony. The wreck of the caravel would afford materials to construct a fortress, which might be defended by her guns, and supplied with her ammunition; and he could spare provisions enough to maintain a small garrison for a year. The people who thus remained on the island could explore it, and make themselves acquainted with its mines, and other sources of wealth; they might, at the same time, procure by traffic a large quantity of gold from the natives; they could learn their language, and accustom themselves to their habits and

manners, so as to be of great use in future intercourse. In the meantime the Admiral could return to Spain, report the success of his enterprise, and bring out reinforcements.

No sooner did this idea break upon the mind of Columbus, than he set about accomplishing it with his accustomed promptness and celerity. The wreck was broken up and brought piecemeal to shore; and a site chosen, and preparations made for the erection of a tower. When Guacanagari was informed of the intention of the Admiral to leave a part of his men for the defence of the island from the Caribs, while he returned to his country for more, he was greatly overjoyed. His subjects manifested equal delight at the idea of retaining these wonderful people among them, and at the prospect of the future arrival of the Admiral, with ships laden with hawks'-bells and other precious articles. They eagerly lent their assistance in building the fortress, little dreaming that they were assisting to place on their necks the galling yoke of perpetual and toilsome slavery.

The preparations for the fortress were scarcely commenced, when certain Indians, arriving at the harbor, brought a report that a great vessel, like those of the Admiral, had anchored in a river at the eastern end of the island. These tidings, for a time, dispelled a

thousand uneasy conjectures which had harassed the mind of Columbus, for of course this vessel could be no other than the *Pinta*. He immediately procured a canoe from Guacanagari, with several Indians to navigate it, and despatched a Spaniard with a letter to Pinzon, couched in amicable terms, making no complaint of his desertion, but urging him to join company immediately.

After three days' absence the canoe returned. The Spaniard reported that he had pursued the coast for twenty leagues, but had neither seen nor heard anything of the *Pinta;* he considered the report, therefore, as incorrect. Other rumors, however, were immediately afterwards circulated at the harbor, of this large vessel to the eastward; but on investigation they appeared to Columbus to be equally undeserving of credit. He relapsed, therefore, into his doubts and anxieties in respect to Pinzon. Since the shipwreck of his vessel, the desertion of that commander had become a matter of still more serious moment, and had obliged him to alter all his plans. Should the *Pinta* be lost, as was very possible in a voyage of such extent, and exposed to so many uncommon perils, there would then be but one ship surviving, of the three which had set sail from Palos, and that one an indifferent sailer. On

the precarious return of that crazy bark, across an immense expanse of ocean, would depend the ultimate success of the expedition. Should that one likewise perish, every record of this great discovery would be swallowed up with it; the name of Columbus would only be remembered as that of a mad adventurer, who, despising the opinions of the learned and the counsels of the wise, had departed into the wilds of the ocean never to return; the obscurity of his fate, and its imagined horrors, might deter all future enterprise, and thus the New World might remain, as heretofore, unknown to civilized man. These considerations determined Columbus to abandon all further prosecution of his voyage; to leave unexplored the magnificent regions which were inviting him on every hand; to give up all hope for the present of finding his way to the dominions of the Grand Khan, and to lose no time in returning to Spain and reporting his discovery.

While the fortress was building, he continued to receive every day new proofs of the amity and kindness of Guacanagari. Whenever he went on shore to superintend the works, he was entertained in the most hospitable manner by that chieftain. He had the largest house in the place prepared for his reception, strewed or carpeted with palm-leaves, and furnished

with low stools of a black and shining wood that looked like jet. When he received the Admiral, it was always in a style of princely generosity, hanging round his neck some jewel of gold, or making him some present of similar value.

On one occasion he came to meet him on his landing, attended by five tributary caciques, each carrying a coronet of gold; they conducted him with great deference to the house already mentioned, where, seating him in one of the chairs, Guacanagari took off his own coronet of gold and placed it upon his head; Columbus in return took from his neck a collar of fine-colored beads, which he put round that of the Cacique; he invested him with his own mantle of fine cloth, gave him a pair of colored boots, and put on his finger a large silver ring, upon which metal the Indians set a great value, it not being found in their island.

The Cacique exerted himself to the utmost to procure a great quantity of gold for the Admiral before his departure for Spain. The supplies thus furnished, and the vague accounts collected through the medium of signs and imperfect interpretations, gave Columbus magnificent ideas of the wealth in the interior of this island. The names of caciques, mountains, and provinces, were confused together in his

The Parmigiano Portrait of Christopher Columbus

imagination, and supposed to mean various places where great treasure was to be found; above all, the name of Cibao continually occurred, the golden region among the mountain, whence the natives procured most of the ore for their ornaments. In the pimento or red pepper which abounded in the island, he fancied he found a trace of Oriental spices, and he thought he had met with specimens of rhubarb.

Passing, with his usual excitability, from a state of doubt and anxiety to one of sanguine anticipation, he now considered his shipwreck as a providential event mysteriously ordained by Heaven to work out the success of his enterprise. Without this seeming disaster, he should never have remained to find out the secret wealth of the island, but should merely have touched at various parts of the coast, and passed on. As a proof that the particular hand of Providence was exerted in it, he cites the circumstance of his having been wrecked in a perfect calm, without wind or wave, and the desertion of the pilot and mariners, when sent to carry out an anchor astern; for, had they performed his orders, the vessel would have been hauled off, they would have pursued their voyage, and the treasures of the island would have remained a secret. But now he

looked forward to glorious fruits to be reaped from this seeming evil, "for he hoped," he said, "that when he returned from Spain he should find a ton of gold collected in traffic by those whom he had left behind, and mines and spices discovered in such quantities, that the sovereigns, before three years, would be able to undertake a crusade for the deliverance of the Holy Sepulchre," the grand object to which he had proposed that they should dedicate the fruits of this enterprise.

Such was the visionary, yet generous, enthusiasm of Columbus, the moment that prospects of vast wealth broke upon his mind. What in some spirits would have awakened a grasping and sordid avidity to accumulate, immediately filled his imagination with plans of magnificent expenditure. But how vain are our attempts to interpret the inscrutable decrees of Providence! The shipwreck, which Columbus considered an act of divine favor, to reveal to him the secrets of the land, shackled and limited all his after discoveries. It linked his fortunes, for the remainder of his life, to this island, which was doomed to be to him a source of cares and troubles, to involve him in a thousand perplexities, and to becloud his declining years with humiliation and disappointment.

Chapter XI.

REGULATION OF THE FORTRESS OF LA NAVIDAD—DEPARTURE OF COLUMBUS FOR SPAIN.

SO great was the activity of the Spaniards in the construction of their fortress, and so ample the assistance rendered by the natives, that in ten days it was sufficiently complete for service. A large vault had been made, over which was erected a strong wooden tower, and the whole was surrounded by a wide ditch. It was stored with all the ammunition saved from the wreck, or that could be spared from the caravel; and, the guns being mounted, the whole had a formidable aspect, sufficient to overawe and repulse this naked and unwarlike people. Indeed, Columbus was of opinion that but little force was necessary to subjugate the whole island. He considered a fortress, and the restrictions of a garrison, more requisite to keep the Spaniards themselves in order, and prevent their

wandering about and committing acts of licentiousness among the natives.

The fortress being finished, he gave it, as well as the adjacent village and the harbor, the name of La Navidad, or The Nativity, in memorial of their having escaped from the shipwreck on Christmas day. Many volunteered to remain on the island, from whom he selected thirty-nine of the most able and exemplary, and among them a physician, ship-carpenter, calker, cooper, tailor, and gunner, all expert at their several callings. The command was given to Diego de Arana, a native of Cordova, and notary and alguazil to the armanent, who was to retain all the powers vested in him by the Catholic sovereigns. In case of his death, Pedro Gutierrez was to command, and he dying, Rodrigo de Escobedo. The boat of the wreck was left with them, to be used in fishing; a variety of seeds to sow, and a large quantity of articles for traffic, that they might procure as much gold as possible against the Admiral's return.*

As the time drew nigh for his departure, Columbus assembled those who were to remain in the island, and made them an earnest address, charging them, in the name of the sovereigns,

* *Primer Viage de Colon*, Navarrete, tom. i. *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 33.

to be obedient to the officer left in command; to maintain the utmost respect and reverence for the Cacique Guacanagari and his chieftains, recollecting how deeply they were indebted to his goodness, and how important a continuance of it was to their welfare. To be circumspect in their intercourse with the natives, avoiding disputes, and treating them always with gentleness and justice; and, above all, being discreet in their conduct towards the Indian women, misconduct in this respect being the frequent source of troubles and disasters in the intercourse with savage nations. He warned them, moreover, not to scatter themselves asunder, but to keep together, for mutual safety, and not to stray beyond the friendly territory of Guacanagari. He enjoined it upon Arana, and the others in command, to acquire a knowledge of the productions and mines of the island, to procure gold and spices, and to seek along the coast a better situation for a settlement, the present harbor being inconvenient and dangerous, from the rocks and shoals which beset its entrance.

On the 2d of January, 1493, Columbus landed to take a farewell of the generous Cacique and his chieftains, intending the next day to set sail. He gave them a parting feast at the house devoted to his use, and commended to

their kindness the men who were to remain, especially Diego de Arana, Pedro Gutierrez, and Rodrigo de Escobedo, his lieutenants, assuring the Cacique that, when he returned from Castile, he would bring abundance of jewels more precious than any he or his people had yet seen. The worthy Guacanagari showed great concern at the idea of his departure, and assured him that, as to those who remained, he would furnish them with provisions, and render them every service in his power.

Once more to impress the Indians with an idea of the warlike prowess of the white men, Columbus caused the crews to perform skirmishes and mock-fights, with swords, bucklers, lances, cross-bows, arquebuses, and cannon. The Indians were astonished at the keenness of the swords, and at the deadly power of the cross-bows and arquebuses; but they were struck with awe when the heavy Lombards were discharged from the fortress, wrapping it in wreaths of smoke, shaking the forest with their report, and shivering the trees with the balls of stone used in artillery in those times. As these tremendous powers, however, were all to be employed for their protection, they rejoiced while they trembled, since no Carib would now dare to invade their island.*

* *Primer Viage de Colon*, Navarrete, tom. i., p. 121.

The festivities of the day being over, Columbus embraced the Cacique and his principal chieftains, and took a final leave of them. Guacanagari shed tears; for while he had been awed by the dignified demeanor of the Admiral, and the idea of his superhuman nature, he had been completely won by the benignity of his manners. Indeed, the parting scene was sorrowful on all sides. The arrival of the ships had been an event of wonder and excitement to the islanders, who had as yet known nothing but the good qualities of their guests, and had been enriched by their celestial gifts; while the rude seamen had been flattered by the blind deference paid them, and captivated by the kindness and unlimited indulgence with which they had been treated.

The sorest parting was between the Spaniards who embarked and those who remained behind, from the strong sympathy caused by companionship in perils and adventures. The little garrison, however, evinced a stout heart, looking forward to the return of the Admiral from Spain with large reinforcements, when they promised to give him a good account of all things in the island. The caravel was detained a day longer by the absence of some of the Indians whom they were to take to Spain. At length the signal-gun was fired; the crew

gave a parting cheer to the handful of comrades thus left in the wilderness of an unknown world, who echoed their cheering as they gazed wistfully after them from the beach, but who were destined never to welcome their return.

NOTE *about the localities in the preceding chapter, extracted from the letter of T. S. Heneken, Esq.*

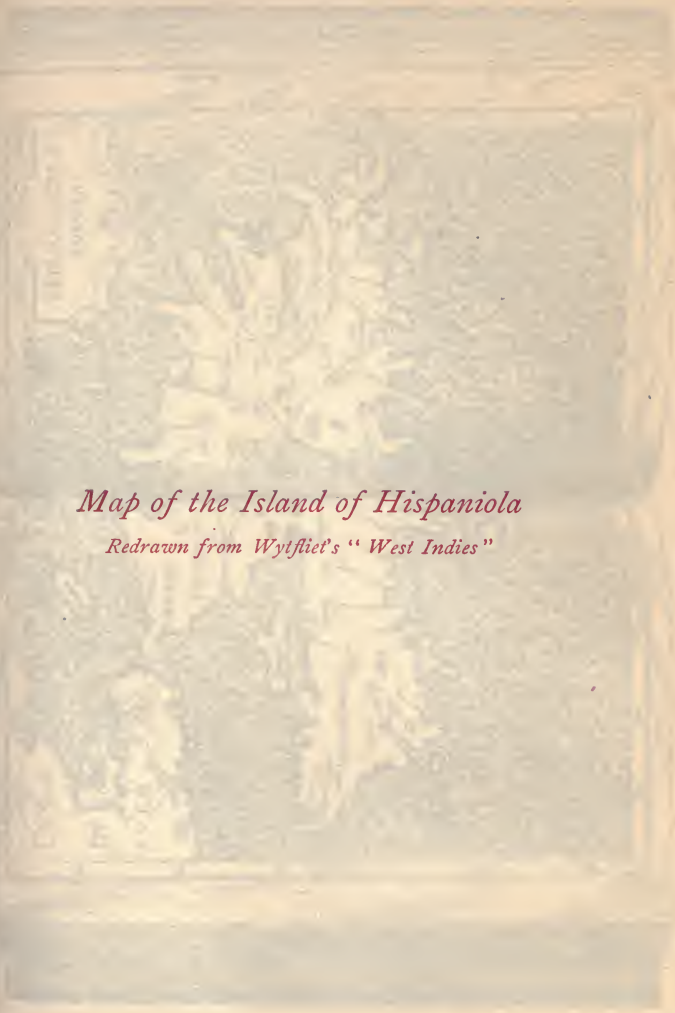
Guacanagari's capital town was called Guarico. From the best information I can gather, it was situated a short distance from the beach, where the village of Petit Anse now stands; which is about two miles southeast of Cape Haytien.

Oviedo says that Columbus took in water for his homeward voyage from a small stream to the northwest of the anchorage; and presuming him to have been at anchor off Petit Anse, this stream presents itself falling from the Picolet mountain, crossing the present town of Cape Haytien, and emptying into the bay near the Arsenal.

The stream which supplied Columbus with water was dammed up at the foot of the mountain by the French when in possession of the country, and its water now feeds a number of public fountains.

Punta Santa could be no other than the present Point Picolet.

Beating up from St. Nicholas Mole along an almost precipitous and iron-bound coast, a prospect of unrivalled splendor breaks upon the view on turning this point; the spacious bay, the extensive plains, and the distant *cordilleras* of the Cibao mountains, impose



Map of the Island of Hispaniola

Redrawn from Wytfliet's "West Indies"

CVBÆ
IN
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HISPANIOLA
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with caressing hospitality. The men were simple, frank, and cordial; the women loving and compliant, and prompt to form those connections which anchor the most wandering heart. They saw gold glittering around them, to be had without labor, and every enjoyment to be procured without cost. Captivated by these advantages, many of the seamen represented to the Admiral the difficulties and sufferings they must encounter on a return voyage, where so many would be crowded in a small caravel, and entreated permission to remain in the island.*

* *Primer Viage de Colon*, Navarrete, tom. i., p. 116.

Book V.

Chapter I.

COASTING TOWARDS THE EASTERN END OF HISPANIOLA—MEETING WITH PINZON—AFFAIR WITH THE NATIVES AT THE GULF OF SAMANA.

[1493.]

IT was on the 4th of January that Columbus set sail from La Navidad on his return to Spain. The wind being light, it was necessary to tow the caravel out of the harbor, and clear of the reefs. They then stood eastward, towards a lofty promontory destitute of trees, but covered with grass and shaped like a tent, having at a distance the appearance of a towering island, being connected with Hispaniola by a low neck of land. To this promontory Columbus gave the name of Monte Christi, by which it is still known. The country in the immediate neighborhood was level, but farther inland rose a high range of mountains, well wooded, with broad, fruitful

valleys between them, watered by abundant streams. The wind being contrary, they were detained for two days in a large bay to the west of the promontory. On the 6th, they again made sail with a land breeze, and, weathering the cape, advanced ten leagues, when the wind again turned to blow freshly from the east. At this time, a sailor stationed at the mast-head to look out for rocks, cried out that he beheld the *Pinta* at a distance. The certainty of the fact gladdened the heart of the Admiral, and had an animating effect throughout the ship ; for it was a joyful event to the mariners once more to meet with their comrades, and to have a companion bark in their voyage through these lonely seas.

The *Pinta* came sweeping towards them, directly before the wind. The Admiral was desirous of having a conversation with Martin Alonzo Pinzon, and seeing that all attempt was fruitless from the obstinacy of the adverse wind, and that there was no safe anchorage in the neighborhood, he put back to the bay a little west of Monte Christi, whither he was followed by the *Pinta*. On their first interview, Pinzon endeavored to excuse his desertion, alleging that he had been compelled to part company by stress of weather, and had ever since been seeking to rejoin the Admiral.

Columbus listened passively but dubiously to his apologies; and the suspicions he had conceived appeared to be warranted by subsequent information. He was told that Pinzon had been excited by accounts given him by one of the Indians on board of his vessel of a region to the eastward, abounding in gold. Taking advantage, therefore, of the superior sailing of his vessel, he had worked to windward, when the other ships had been obliged to put back, and had sought to be the first to discover and enjoy this golden region. After separating from his companions he had been entangled for several days among a cluster of small islands, supposed to have been the Caicos, but had at length been guided by the Indians to Hispaniola. Here he remained three weeks, trading with the natives in the river already mentioned, and collected a considerable quantity of gold, one half which he retained as captain, the rest he divided among his men to secure their fidelity and secrecy.

Such were the particulars privately related to Columbus; who, however, repressed his indignation at this flagrant breach of duty, being unwilling to disturb the remainder of his voyage with any altercations with Pinzon, who had a powerful party of relatives and townsmen in the armament. To such a degree,

however, was his confidence in his confederates impaired, that he determined to return forthwith to Spain, though under other circumstances, he would have been tempted to explore the coast in hopes of freighting his ships with treasure.*

The boats were accordingly despatched to a large river in the neighborhood, to procure a supply of wood and water for the voyage. This river, called by the natives the Yaqui, flows from the mountains of the interior and throws itself into the bay; receiving, in its course, the contributions of various minor streams. Many particles of gold were perceived among the sands at its mouth, and others were found adhering to the hoops of the water-casks.† Columbus gave it, therefore, the name of Rio del Oro, or the Golden River. It is at present called the Santiago.

In this neighborhood were turtles of great size. Columbus also mentions in his journal, that he saw three mermaids which elevated themselves above the surface of the sea, and he observes that he had before seen such on

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 34.

† Las Casas suggests that these may have been particles of marcasite, which abounds in this river, and in the other streams which fall from the mountains of Cibao. Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 76.

the coast of Africa. He adds that they were by no means the beautiful beings that they had been represented, although they possessed some traces of the human countenance. It is supposed that these must have been manati, or sea-calves, seen indistinctly at a distance; and that the imagination of Columbus, disposed to give a wonderful character to everything in this new world, had identified these misshapen animals with the sirens of ancient story.

On the evening of the 9th of January they again made sail, and on the following day arrived at the river where Pinzon had been trading, to which Columbus gave the name of Rio de Gracia; but it took the appellation of its original discoverer, and long continued to be known as the river of Martin Alonzo.* The natives of this place complained that Pinzon, on his previous visit, had violently carried off four men and two girls. The Admiral, finding they were retained on board of the *Pinta* to be carried to Spain and sold as slaves, ordered them to be immediately restored to their homes, with many presents, and well clothed, to atone for the wrong they had experienced.

* It is now called Porto Caballo, but the surrounding plain is called the Savanna of Martin Alonzo.—T. S. Heneken.

This restitution was made with great unwillingness, and many high words, on the part of Pinzon.

The wind being favorable, for in these regions the trade-wind is often alternated during autumn and winter by northwesterly breezes, they continued coasting the island, until they came to a high and beautiful headland, to which they gave the name of Capo del Enamorado, or the Lover's Cape, but which at present is known as Cape Cabron. A little beyond this, they anchored in a bay, or rather gulf, three leagues in breadth, and extending so far inland that Columbus at first supposed it an arm of the sea separating Hispaniola from some other land. On landing, they found the natives quite different from the gentle and pacific people hitherto met with on this island. They were of a ferocious aspect, and hideously painted. Their hair was long, tied behind, and decorated with the feathers of parrots and other birds of gaudy plumage. Some were armed with war-clubs; others had bows of the length of those used by the English archers, with arrows of slender reeds, pointed with hard wood, or tipped with bone or the tooth of a fish. Their swords were of palm-wood, as hard and heavy as iron; not sharp, but broad, nearly of the thickness of

two fingers, and capable, with one blow, of cleaving through a helmet to the very brains.* Though thus prepared for combat, they made no attempt to molest the Spaniards; on the contrary, they sold them two of their bows and several of their arrows, and one of them was prevailed upon to go on board of the Admiral's ship.

Columbus was persuaded, from the ferocious looks and hardy undaunted manner of this wild warrior, that he and his companions were of the nation of Caribs, so much dreaded throughout these seas, and that the gulf in which he was anchored must be a strait separating their island from Hispaniola. On inquiring of the Indian, however, he still pointed to the east as the quarter where lay the Caribbean Islands. He spoke also of an island called Mantinino, which Columbus fancied him to say was peopled merely by women, who received the Caribs among them once a year, for the sake of continuing the population of their island. All the male progeny resulting from such visits were delivered to the fathers; the female remained with the mothers.

This Amazonian island is repeatedly mentioned in the course of the voyages of Colum-

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 77, MS.

bus, and is another of his self-delusions, to be explained by the work of Marco Polo. That traveller described two islands near the coast of Asia, one inhabited solely by women, the other by men, between which a similar intercourse subsisted*; and Columbus, supposing himself in that vicinity, easily interpreted the signs of the Indians to coincide with the descriptions of the Venetian.

Having regaled the warrior, and made him various presents, the Admiral sent him on shore, in hopes, through his mediation, of opening a trade for gold with his companions. As the boat approached the land, upwards of fifty savages, armed with bows and arrows, war-clubs, and javelins, were seen lurking among the trees. On a word from the Indian who was in the boat, they laid by their arms and came forth to meet the Spaniards. The latter, according to directions from the Admiral, endeavored to purchase several of their weapons, to take as curiosities to Spain. They parted with two of their bows; but, suddenly conceiving some distrust, or thinking to overpower this handful of strangers, they rushed to the place where they had left their weapons, snatched them up, and returned with

* *Marco Polo*, book iii., chap. 33; English edition of Marsden.

Landing Party Attacked by Natives

Reduction of fac-simile from Gottfriedt's "Newe Welt"

cords, as if to bind the Spaniards. The latter immediately attacked them, wounded two, put the rest to flight, and would have pursued them, but were restrained by the pilot who commanded the boat. This was the first contest with the Indians, and the first time that native blood was shed by the white men in this new world. Columbus was grieved to see all his exertions to maintain an amicable intercourse vain; he consoled himself with the idea, however, that if these were Caribs, or frontier Indians of warlike character, they would be inspired with a dread of the force and weapons of the white men, and be deterred from molesting the litttle garrison of Fort Nativity. The fact was that these were of a bold and hardy race, inhabiting a mountainous district called Ciguay, extending five-and-twenty leagues along the coast, and several leagues in the interior. They differed in language, looks, and manners from the other natives of the island, and had the rude but independent and vigorous character of mountaineers.

Their frank and bold spirit was evinced on the day after the skirmish, when a multitude appearing on the beach, the Admiral sent a large party, well armed, on shore in the boat. The natives approached as

freely and confidently as if nothing had happened; neither did they betray, throughout their subsequent intercourse, any signs of lurking fear or enmity. The cacique who had ruled over the neighboring country was on the shore. He sent to the boat a string of beads formed of small stones, or rather of the hard part of shells, which the Spaniards understood to be a token and assurance of amity; but they were not yet aware of the full meaning of this symbol, the wampum belt, the pledge of peace, held sacred among the Indians. The chieftain followed shortly after, and entering the boat with only three attendants, was conveyed on board of the caravel.

This frank and confiding conduct, so indicative of a brave and generous nature, was properly appreciated by Columbus; he received the cacique cordially, set before him a collation such as the caravel afforded, particularly biscuits and honey, which were great dainties with the Indians, and after showing him the wonders of the vessel, and making him and his attendants many presents, sent them to land highly gratified. The residence of the cacique was at such a distance that he could not repeat his visit; but, as a token of high regard, he sent to the Admiral his coro-

net of gold. In speaking of these incidents the historians of Columbus have made no mention of the name of this mountain chief; he was doubtless the same who, a few years afterwards, appears in the history of the island under the name of Mayonabex, Cacique of the Ciguayans, and will be found acquitting himself with valor, frankness, and magnanimity, under the most trying circumstances.

Columbus remained a day or two longer in the bay, during which time the most friendly intercourse prevailed with the natives, who brought cotton, and various fruits and vegetables, but still maintained their warrior character, being always armed with bows and arrows. Four young Indians gave such interesting accounts of the islands situated in the east, that Columbus determined to touch there on his way to Spain, and prevailed on them to accompany him as guides. Taking advantage of a favorable wind, therefore, he sailed before daylight on the 16th of January from this bay, to which, in consequence of the skirmish with the natives, he gave the name of Golfo de las Flechas, or the Gulf of Arrows, but which is now known by the name of the Gulf of Samana.

On leaving the bay Columbus at first steered to the northeast, in which direction the young

Indians assured him he would find the island of the Caribs, and that of Mantinino, the abode of the Amazons; it being his desire to take several of the natives of each, to present to the Spanish sovereigns. After sailing about sixteen leagues, however, his Indian guides changed their opinion, and pointed to the southeast. This would have brought him to Porto Rico, which, in fact, was known among the Indians as the island of Carib. The Admiral immediately shifted sail, and stood in this direction. He had not proceeded two leagues, however, when a most favorable breeze sprang up for the voyage to Spain. He observed a gloom gathering on the countenances of the sailors, as they diverged from the homeward route. Reflecting upon the little hold he had upon the feelings and affections of these men, the insubordinate spirit they had repeatedly evinced, the uncertainty of the good faith of Pinzon, and the leaky condition of his ships, he was suddenly brought to a pause. As long as he protracted his return, the whole fate of his discovery was at the mercy of a thousand contingencies, and an adverse accident might bury himself, his crazy barks, and all the records of his voyage forever in the ocean. Repressing, therefore, the strong inclination to seek further discoveries,

and determined to place what he had already made beyond the reach of accident, he once more shifted sail, to the great joy of his crews, and resumed his course for Spain.*

* *Journal of Columbus*, Navarrete, tom. i. Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 77. *Hist. del. Almirante*, cap. 34, 35.

Chapter VI.

RETURN VOYAGE—VIOLENT STORMS—ARRIVAL AT THE AZORES.

[1493.]

THE trade-winds which had been so propitious to Columbus on his outward voyage, were equally adverse to him on his return. The favorable breeze soon died away, and throughout the remainder of January there was a prevalence of light winds from the eastward, which prevented any great progress. He was frequently detained also by the bad sailing of the *Pinta*, the foremast of which was so defective that it could carry but little sail. The weather continued mild and pleasant, and the sea so calm that the Indians whom they were taking to Spain would frequently plunge into the water, and swim about the ships. They saw many tunny fish, one of which they killed, as likewise a large shark;

these gave them a temporary supply of provisions, of which they soon began to stand in need, their sea stock being reduced to bread and wine and Agi peppers, which last they had learned from the Indians to use as an important article of food.

In the early part of February, having run to about the thirty-eighth degree of north latitude, and got out of the track swept by the trade-winds, they had more favorable breezes, and were enabled to steer direct for Spain. From the frequent changes of their course, the pilots became perplexed in their reckonings, differing widely among themselves, and still more widely from the truth. Columbus, beside keeping a careful reckoning, was a vigilant observer of those indications furnished by the sea, the air, and the sky; the fate of himself and his ships, in the unknown regions which he traversed, often depended upon these observations; and the sagacity at which he arrived, in deciphering the signs of the elements, was looked upon by the common seamen as something almost supernatural. In the present instance he noticed where the great bands of floating weeds commenced, and where they finished; and in emerging from among them, concluded himself to be in about the same degree of longitude as when he encoun-

tered them on his outward voyage; that is to say about two hundred and sixty leagues west of Ferro. On the 10th of February, Vicente Yañez Pinzon, and the pilots Ruiz and Bartolomeo Roldan, who were on board of the Admiral's ship, examined the charts and compared their reckonings to determine their situation, but could not come to any agreement. They all supposed themselves at least one hundred and fifty leagues nearer Spain than what Columbus believed to be the true reckoning, and in the latitude of Madeira, whereas he knew them to be nearly in a direction for the Azores. He suffered them, however, to remain in their error, and even added to their perplexity, that they might retain but a confused idea of the voyage, and he alone possess a clear knowledge of the route to the newly discovered countries.*

On the 12th of February, as they were flattering themselves with soon coming in sight of land, the wind came on to blow violently, with a heavy sea; they still kept their course to the east, but with great labor and peril. On the following day, after sunset, the wind and swell increased; there were three flashes of lightning in the north-northeast, considered by Columbus as signals of an ap-

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib, i., cap. 70.

proaching tempest. It soon burst upon them with frightful violence: their small and crazy vessels, open and without decks, were little fitted for the wild storms of the Atlantic; all night they were obliged to scud under bare poles. As the morning dawned of the 14th, there was a transient pause, and they made a little sail; but the wind rose again from the south with redoubled vehemence, raging throughout the day, and increasing in fury in the night; while the vessel labored terribly in a cross sea, the broken waves of which threatened at each moment to overwhelm them, or dash them to pieces. For three days they lay to, with just sail enough to keep them above the waves; but the tempest still augmenting, they were obliged again to scud before the wind. The *Pinta* was soon lost sight of in the darkness of the night. The Admiral kept as much as possible to the northeast, to approach the coast of Spain, and made signal lights at the mast-head for the *Pinta* to do the same, and to keep her company. The latter, however, from the weakness of her foremast, could not hold the wind, and was obliged to scud before it, directly north. For some time she replied to the signals of the Admiral, but her lights gleamed more and more distant, until they ceased entirely, and nothing more was seen of her.

Columbus continued to scud all night, full of forebodings of the fate of his own vessel, and of fears for the safety of that of Pinzon. As the day dawned, the sea presented a frightful waste of wild broken waves, lashed into fury by the gale. He looked round anxiously for the *Pinta*, but she was nowhere to be seen. He now made a little sail, to keep his vessel ahead of the sea, lest its huge waves, should break over her. As the sun rose, the wind and waves rose with it, and throughout a dreary day, the helpless bark was driven along by the fury of the tempest.

Seeing all human skill baffled and confounded, Columbus endeavored to propitiate Heaven by solemn vows and acts of penance. By his orders, a number of beans, equal to the number of persons on board, were put into a cap, on one of which was cut the sign of the cross. Each of the crew made a vow, that, should he draw forth the marked bean, he would make a pilgrimage to the shrine of Santa Maria de Guadalupe, bearing a wax taper of five pounds' weight. The Admiral was the first to put in his hand, and the lot fell upon him. From that moment he considered himself a pilgrim, bound to perform the vow. Another lot was cast in the same way, for a pilgrimage to the chapel of our

Lady of Loretto, which fell upon a seaman named Pedro de Villa, and the Admiral engaged to bear the expenses of his journey. A third lot was also cast for a pilgrimage to Santa Clara de Moguer, to perform a solemn mass, and to watch all night in the chapel, and this likewise fell upon Columbus.

The tempest still raged with unabated violence, the Admiral and all the mariners made a vow, that, if spared, wherever they first landed, they would go in procession barefooted and in their shirts, to offer up prayers and thanksgivings in some church dedicated to the Holy Virgin. Beside these general acts of propitiation, each one made his private vow, binding himself to some pilgrimage, or vigil, or other rite of penitence and thanksgiving at his favorite shrine. The heavens, however, seemed deaf to their vows; the storm grew still more wild and frightful, and each man gave himself up for lost. The danger of the ship was augmented by the want of ballast, the consumption of the water and provisions having lightened her so much, that she rolled and tossed about at the mercy of the waves. To remedy this, and to render her more steady, the Admiral ordered that all the empty casks should be filled with sea-water, which in some measure gave relief.

During this long and awful conflict of the elements, the mind of Columbus was a prey to the most distressing anxiety. He feared that the *Pinta* had foundered in the storm. In such case the whole history of his discovery, the secret of the New World, depended upon his own feeble bark, and one surge of the ocean might bury it forever in oblivion. The tumult of his thoughts may be judged from his own letter to the sovereigns :

"I could have supported this evil fortune with less grief," said he, "had my person alone been in jeopardy, since I am debtor for my life to the supreme Creator, and have at other times been within a step of death. But it was a cause of infinite sorrow and trouble to think that, after having been illuminated from on high with faith and certainty to undertake this enterprise, after having victoriously achieved it, and when on the point of convincing my opponents and securing to your highnesses great glory and vast increase of dominions, it should please the divine Majesty to defeat all by my death. It would have been more supportable also, had I not been accompanied by others who had been drawn on by my persuasions, and who, in their distress, cursed not only the hour of their coming, but the fear inspired by my words which prevented them turning back, as they had at various times determined. Above all, my grief was doubled when I thought of my two sons, whom I had left at school in Cordova, destitute, in a strange land, without any testimony of the services rendered

by their father, which if known might have inclined your highnesses to befriend them. And although on the one hand, I was comforted by faith that the Deity would not permit a work of such great exaltation to his Church, wrought through so many troubles and contradictions, to remain imperfect; yet on the other hand I reflected on my sins, as a punishment for which He might intend that I should be deprived of the glory which would redound to me in this world."*

In the midst of these gloomy apprehensions, an expedient suggested itself, by which though he and his ships should perish the glory of his achievement might survive to his name, and its advantages be secured to his sovereigns. He wrote on parchment a brief account of his voyage and discovery and of his having taken possession of the newly-found lands in the name of their Catholic Majesties. This he sealed and directed to the King and Queen, superscribing a promise of a thousand ducats to whosoever should deliver the packet unopened. He then wrapped it in a wax cloth which he placed in the centre of a cake of wax, and enclosing the whole in a large barrel threw it into the sea, giving his men to suppose he was performing some religious vow. Lest this memorial should never reach the land he enclosed a copy in a similar manner and placed it upon the poop, so that

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 36.

should the caravel be swallowed up by the waves the barrel might float off and survive.

These precautions in some measure mitigated his anxiety and he was still more relieved when after heavy showers there appeared at sunset a streak of clear sky in the west, giving hopes that the wind was about to shift to that quarter. These hopes were confirmed, a favorable breeze succeeded, but the sea still ran so high and tumultuously that little sail could be carried in the night.

On the morning of the 15th, at daybreak, the cry of land was given by Rui Garcia, a mariner in the main-top. The transports of the crew at once more gaining sight of the Old World were almost equal to those experienced on first beholding the New. The land bore east-northeast directly over the prow of the caravel; and the usual diversity of opinion concerning it arose among the pilots. One thought it the island of Madeira; another the rock of Cintra, near Lisbon; the most part deceived by their ardent wishes placed it near Spain. Columbus, however, from his private reckonings and observations concluded it to be one of the Azores. A nearer approach proved it to be an island. It was but five leagues distant and the voyagers were congratulating themselves upon the assurance of speedily being

Nearing Land on Return Voyage

From an old print

in port when the wind veered again to the east-northeast, blowing directly from the land, while a heavy sea kept rolling from the west.

For two days they hovered in sight of the island vainly striving to reach it, or to arrive at another island of which they caught glimpses occasionally through the mist and rack of the tempest. On the evening of the 17th they approached so near the first island as to cast anchor, but parting their cable had to put to sea again, where they remained beating about until the following morning, when they anchored under shelter of its northern side. For several days Columbus had been in such a state of agitation and anxiety as scarcely to take food or repose. Although suffering greatly from a gouty affection to which he was subject, yet he had maintained his watchful post on deck, exposed to wintry cold, to the pelting of the storm, and the drenching surges of the sea. It was not until the night of the 17th that he got a little sleep, more from the exhaustion of nature than from any tranquillity of mind. Such were the difficulties and perils which attended his return to Europe: had one tenth part of them beset his outward voyage his timid and factious crew would have risen in arms against the enterprise, and he never would have discovered the New World.

Chapter III.

TRANSACTIONS AT THE ISLAND OF ST. MARY'S.

[1493.]

ON sending the boat to land Columbus ascertained the island to be St. Mary's, the most southern of the Azores, and a possession of the Crown of Portugal. The inhabitants, when they beheld the light caravel riding at anchor, were astonished that it had been able to live through the gale which had raged for fifteen days with unexampled fury; but when they heard from the boat's crew that this tempest-tossed vessel brought tidings of a strange country beyond the ocean, they were filled with wonder and curiosity. To the inquiries about the place where the caravel might anchor securely, they replied by pointing out a harbor in the vicinity, but prevailed on three of the mariners to remain on shore and gratify

them with further particulars of this unparalleled voyage.

In the evening, three men of the island hailed the caravel, and a boat being sent for them, they brought on board fowls, bread, and various refreshments, from Juan de Castañeda, governor of the island, who claimed an acquaintance with Columbus, and sent him many compliments and congratulations. He apologized for not coming in person, owing to the lateness of the hour and the distance of his residence, but promised to visit the caravel the next morning, bringing further refreshments, and the three men, whom he still kept with him to satisfy his extreme curiosity respecting the voyage. As there were no houses on the neighboring shore, the messengers remained on board all night.

On the following morning Columbus reminded his people of their vow to perform a pious procession at the first place where they should land. On the neighboring shore, at no great distance from the sea, was a small hermitage or chapel dedicated to the Virgin, and he made immediate arrangements for the performance of the rite. The three messengers, on returning to the village, sent a priest to perform mass, and one half of the crew landing, walked in procession, barefooted, and in

their shirts, to the chapel, while the Admiral awaited their return, to perform the same ceremony with the remainder.

An ungenerous reception, however, awaited the poor tempest-tossed mariners on their first return to the abode of civilized men, far different from the sympathy and hospitality they had experienced among the savages of the New World. Scarcely had they begun their prayers and thanksgivings when the rabble of the village, horse and foot, headed by the Governor, surrounded the hermitage and took them all prisoners.

As an intervening point of land hid the hermitage from the view of the caravel, the Admiral remained in ignorance of this transaction. When eleven o'clock arrived without the return of the pilgrims, he began to fear that they were detained by the Portuguese, or that the boat had been shattered upon the surf-beaten rocks which bordered the island. Weighing anchor, therefore, he stood in a direction to command a view of the chapel and the adjacent shore, whence he beheld a number of armed horsemen, who, dismounting, entered the boat and made for the caravel. The Admiral's ancient suspicions of Portuguese hostilities towards himself and his enterprises were immediately revived; and he ordered his

men to arm themselves, but to keep out of sight, ready either to defend the vessel or surprise the boat. The latter, however, approached in a pacific manner, the Governor of the island was on board, and, coming within hail, demanded assurance of personal safety in case he should enter the caravel. This the Admiral readily gave, but the Portuguese still continued at a wary distance. The indignation of Columbus now broke forth; he reproached the Governor with his perfidy and with the wrong he did, not merely to the Spanish monarchs, but to his own sovereign, by such a dishonorable outrage. He informed him of his own rank and dignity, displayed his letters-patent, sealed with the royal seal of Castile, and threatened him with the vengeance of his government. Castañeda replied in a vein of contempt and defiance, declaring that all he had done was in conformity to the commands of the King, his sovereign.

After an unprofitable altercation the boat returned to shore, leaving Columbus much perplexed by this unexpected hostility, and fearful that a war might have broken out between Spain and Portugal during his absence. The next day the weather became so tempestuous that they were driven from their anchorage and obliged to stand to sea toward the island of St.

Michael. For two days the ship continued beating about in great peril, half of her crew being detained on shore, and the greater part of those on board being landsmen and Indians, almost equally useless in difficult navigation. Fortunately, although the waves ran high, there were none of those cross seas which had recently prevailed, otherwise, being so feebly manned, the caravel could scarcely have lived through the storm.

On the evening of the 22d, the weather having moderated, Columbus returned to his anchorage at St. Mary's. Shortly after his arrival, a boat came off, bringing two priests and a notary. After a cautious parley and an assurance of safety, they came on board, and requested a sight of the papers of Columbus, on the part of Castañeda, assuring him that it was the disposition of the Governor to render him every service in his power, provided he really sailed in service of the Spanish sovereigns. Columbus supposed it a manœuvre of Castañeda to cover a retreat from the hostile position he had assumed; restraining his indignation, however, and expressing his thanks for the friendly disposition of the Governor, he showed his letters of commission, which satisfied the priests and the notary. On the following morning, the boat and mariners were

liberated. The latter, during their detention, had collected information from the inhabitants which elucidated the conduct of Castañeda.

The King of Portugal, jealous lest the expedition of Columbus might interfere with his own discoveries, had sent orders to his commanders of islands and distant ports to seize and detain him whenever he should be met with.* In compliance with these orders, Castañeda had, in the first instance, hoped to surprise Columbus in the chapel, and, failing in that attempt, had intended to get him in his power by stratagem, but was deterred by finding him on his guard. Such was the first reception of the Admiral on his return to the Old World, an earnest of the crosses and troubles with which he was to be requited throughout life, for one of the greatest benefits that ever man conferred upon his fellow-beings.

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 39. Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 72.

Chapter IV.

ARRIVAL AT PORTUGAL—VISIT TO THE COURT.

[1493.]

COLUMBUS remained two days longer at the island of St. Mary's, endeavoring to take in wood and ballast, but was prevented by the heavy surf which broke upon the shore. The wind veering to the south, and being dangerous for vessels at anchor off the island, but favorable for the voyage to Spain, he set sail on the 24th of February, and had pleasant weather until the 27th, when, being within one hundred and twenty-five leagues of Cape St. Vincent, he again encountered contrary gales and a boisterous sea. His fortitude was scarcely proof against these perils and delays, which appeared to increase the nearer he approached his home; and he could not help uttering a complaint at thus being repulsed, as it were, "from the very

door of the house." He contrasted the rude storms which raged about the coasts of the Old World, with the genial airs, the tranquil seas, and balmy weather which he supposed perpetually to prevail about the countries he had discovered. "Well," says he, "may the sacred theologians and sage philosophers declare that the terrestrial paradise is in the uttermost extremities of the East, for it is the most temperate of regions."

After experiencing several days of stormy and adverse weather, about midnight on Saturday the 2d of March, the caravel was struck by a squall of wind, which rent all her sails, and continuing to blow with resistless violence, obliged her to scud under bare poles, threatening her each moment with destruction. In this hour of darkness and peril the crew again called upon the aid of Heaven. A lot was cast for the performance of a barefooted pilgrimage to the shrine of Santa Maria de la Cueva in Huelva, and, as usual, the lot fell upon Columbus. There was something singular in the recurrence of this circumstance. Las Casas devoutly considers it as an intimation from the Deity to the Admiral that these storms were all on his account, to humble his pride, and prevent his arrogating to himself the glory of a discovery which was the work of God, and

for which he had merely been chosen as an instrument.*

Various signs appeared of the vicinity of land, which they supposed must be the coast of Portugal; the tempest, however, increased to such a degree, that they doubted whether any of them would survive to reach a port. The whole crew made a vow, in case their life was spared to fast upon bread and water the following Saturday. The turbulence of the elements was still greater in the course of the following night. The sea was broken, wild, and mountainous; at one moment the light caravel was tossed high in the air, and the next moment seemed sinking in a yawning abyss. The rain at times fell in torrents,—and the lightning flashed and thunder pealed from various parts of the heavens.

In the first watch of this fearful night, the seamen gave the usually welcome cry of land, but it now only increased the general alarm. They knew not where they were, or where to look for a harbor; they dreaded being driven on shore, or dashed upon rocks; and thus the very land they had so earnestly desired was a terror to them. Taking in sail, therefore, they kept to sea as much as possible, and waited anxiously for the morning light.

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 73.

At daybreak on the 4th of March they found themselves off the rock of Cintra, at the mouth of the Tagus. Though entertaining a strong distrust of the good-will of Portugal, the still prevailing tempest left Columbus no alternative but to run in for shelter; he accordingly anchored about three o'clock, opposite to the Rastello, to the great joy of the crew, who returned thanks to God for their escape from so many perils.

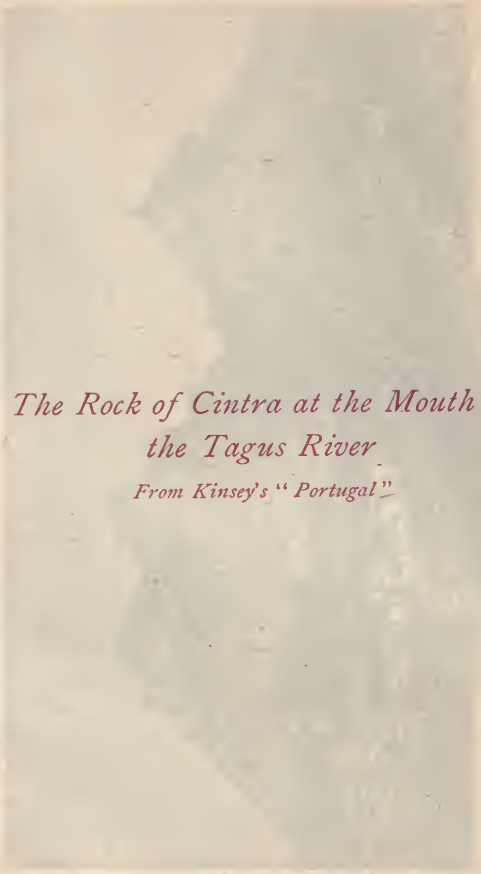
The inhabitants came off from various parts of the shore, congratulating them on what they considered a miraculous preservation. They had been watching the vessel the whole morning with great anxiety, and putting up prayers for her safety. The oldest mariners of the place assured Columbus they had never known so tempestuous a winter; many vessels had remained for months in port, weather-bound, and there had been numerous shipwrecks.

Immediately on his arrival Columbus despatched a courier to the King and Queen of Spain, with tidings of his discovery. He wrote also to the King of Portugal, then at Valparaiso, requesting permission to go with his vessel to Lisbon; for a report had gone abroad that his caravel was laden with gold, and he felt insecure in the mouth of the Tagus, in the neighborhood of a place like Rastello,

scantily peopled by needy and adventurous inhabitants. To prevent any misunderstanding as to the nature of his voyage, he assured the King that he had not been on the coast of Guinea, nor to any other of the Portuguese colonies, but had come from Cipango and the extremity of India, which he had discovered by sailing to the west.

On the following day, Don Alonzo de Acuna, the captain of a large Portuguese man-of-war, stationed at Rastello, summoned Columbus on board his ship, to give an account of himself and his vessel. The latter asserted his rights and dignities as Admiral of the Castilian sovereigns, and refused to leave his vessel, or to send any one in his place. No sooner, however, did the commander learn his rank, and the extraordinary nature of his voyage, than he came to the caravel with great sound of drums, fifes, and trumpets, manifesting the courtesy of a brave and generous spirit, and making the fullest offer of his services.

When the tidings reached Lisbon of this wonderful bark, anchored in the Tagus, freighted with the people and productions of a newly-discovered world, the effect may be more easily conceived than described. Lisbon, for nearly a century, had derived its chief glories from its maritime discoveries, but here



The Rock of Cintra at the Mouth of the Tagus River

From Kinsey's "Portugal"

WILSON

was an achievement that eclipsed them all. Curiosity could scarcely have been more excited had the vessel come freighted with the wonders of another planet. For several days the Tagus presented a gay and moving picture, covered with barges and boats of every kind, swarming round the caravel. From morning to night the vessel was thronged with visitors, among whom were cavaliers of high distinction, and various officers of the Crown. All hung with rapt attention upon the accounts given by Columbus and his crew, of the events of their voyage, and of the New World they had discovered; and gazed with insatiable curiosity upon the specimens of unknown plants and animals, but above all, upon the Indians, so different from any race of men hitherto known. Some were filled with generous enthusiasm at the idea of a discovery so sublime and so beneficial to mankind; the avarice of others was inflamed by the description of wild unappropriated regions, teeming with gold, with pearls and spices; while others repined at the incredulity of the King and his councillors, by which so immense an acquisition had been forever lost to Portugal.

On the 8th of March a cavalier called Don Martin de Noroña came with a letter from King John, congratulating Columbus on his arrival

and inviting him to the court, which was then at Valparaiso, about nine leagues from Lisbon. The King, with his usual magnificence, issued orders at the same time that everything which the Admiral required, for himself, his crew, or his vessel, should be furnished promptly and abundantly, without cost.

Columbus would gladly have declined the royal invitation, feeling distrust of the good faith of the King, but tempestuous weather had placed him in his power, and he thought it prudent to avoid all appearance of suspicion. He set forth, therefore, that very evening for Valparaiso, accompanied by his pilot. The first night he slept at Sacamben, where preparations had been made for his honorable entertainment. The weather being rainy he did not reach Valparaiso until the following night. On approaching the royal residence the principal cavaliers of the King's household came forth to meet him and attended him with great ceremony to the palace. His reception by the monarch was worthy of an enlightened prince. He ordered him to seat himself in his presence, an honor only granted to persons of royal dignity ; and after many congratulations on the result of his enterprise assured him that everything in his kingdom that could be of service to his sovereign or himself was at his command.

A long conversation ensued, in which Columbus gave an account of his voyage, and of the countries he had discovered. The King listened with much seeming pleasure, but with secret grief and mortification: reflecting that this splendid enterprise had once been offered to himself, and had been rejected. A casual observation showed what was passing through his thoughts. He expressed a doubt whether the discovery did not really appertain to the Crown of Portugal, according to the capitulations of the treaty of 1479 with the Castilian sovereigns. Columbus replied that he had never seen those capitulations, nor knew anything of their nature: his orders had been not to go to La Mina nor the coast of Guinea, which orders he had carefully observed. The King made a gracious reply, expressing himself satisfied that he had acted correctly, and persuaded that these matters would be readily adjusted between the two powers without the need of umpires. On dismissing Columbus for the night he gave him in charge as guest to the Prior of Crato, the principal personage present, by whom he was honorably and hospitably entertained.

On the following day the King made many minute enquiries as to the soil, productions, and people of the newly discovered countries,

and the route taken in the voyage; to all which Columbus gave the fullest replies, endeavoring to show in the clearest manner that these were regions heretofore undiscovered and unappropriated by any Christian power. Still the King was uneasy lest this vast and undefined discovery should in some way interfere with his own newly acquired territory. He doubted whether Columbus had not found a short way to those very countries which were the object of his own expeditions, and which were comprehended in the papal bull granting to the Crown of Portugal all the lands which it should discover from Cape Non to the Indies.

On suggesting these doubts to his councillors they eagerly confirmed them. Some of these were the very persons who had once derided this enterprise and scoffed at Columbus as a dreamer. To them its success was a source of confusion, and the return of Columbus covered with glory a deep humiliation. Incapable of conceiving the high and generous thoughts which elevated him at that moment above all mean considerations, they attributed to all his actions the most petty and ignoble motives. His rational exultation was construed into an insulting triumph, and they accused him of assuming a boastful and vain-glorious tone

when talking with the King of his discovery, as if he would revenge himself upon the monarch for having rejected his propositions.* With the greatest eagerness, therefore, they sought to foster the doubts which had sprung up in the royal mind. Some who had seen the natives brought in the caravel, declared that their color, hair, and manners agreed with the descriptions of the people of that part of India which lay within the route of the Portuguese discoveries, and which had been included in the papal bull. Others observed that there was but little distance between the Tercera Islands and those which Columbus had discovered, and that the latter, therefore, clearly appertained to Portugal. Seeing the King much perturbed in spirit, some even went so far as to propose, as a means of impeding the

* Vasconcellos, *Vida de D. Juan II.*, lib. vi. The Portuguese historians in general charge Columbus with having conducted himself loftily, and talked in vaunting terms of his discoveries, in his conversations with the King. It is evident their information must have been derived from prejudiced courtiers. Faria y Souza, in his *Europa Portuguesa* (parte iii., cap. 4), goes so far as to say that Columbus entered into the port of Rastello merely to make Portugal sensible, by the sight of the trophies of his discovery, how much she had lost by not accepting his propositions.

prosecution of these enterprises, that Columbus should be assassinated; declaring that he deserved death for attempting to deceive and embroil the two nations by his pretended discoveries. It was suggested that his assassination might easily be accomplished without incurring any odium; advantage might be taken of his lofty deportment to pique his pride, provoke him into an altercation, and then despatch him as if in casual and honorable encounter.

It is difficult to believe that such wicked and dastardly counsel could have been proposed to a monarch so upright as John II., but the fact is asserted by various historians, Portuguese as well as Spanish,* and it accords with the perfidious advice formerly given to the monarch in respect to Columbus. There is a spurious loyalty about courts, which is often prone to prove its zeal by its baseness; and it is the weakness of kings to tolerate the grossest faults when they appear to arise from personal devotion.

Happily the King had too much magnanimity to adopt the iniquitous measure proposed. He did justice to the great merit of Columbus,

* Vasconcellos, *Vida del Rei Don Juan II.*, lib. vi., Garcia de Resende, *Vida do Dom Joam II.* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 74, MS.

and honored him as a distinguished benefactor of mankind; and he felt it his duty, as a generous prince, to protect all strangers driven by adverse fortune to his ports. Others of his council suggested a more bold and martial line of policy. They advised that Columbus should be permitted to return to Spain; but that before he could fit out a second expedition a powerful armament should be despatched, under the guidance of two Portuguese mariners who had sailed with the Admiral, to take possession of the newly discovered country,—possession being after all the best title, and an appeal to arms the clearest mode of settling so doubtful a question.

This counsel, in which there was a mixture of courage and craft, was more relished by the King, and he resolved privately but promptly to put it in execution, fixing upon Don Francisco de Almeida, one of the most distinguished captains of the age, to command the expedition.*

In the meantime Columbus, after being treated with distinguished attention, was escorted back to his ship by Don Martin de Noroña and a numerous train of cavaliers of the court, a mule being provided for himself and another for his pilot to whom the King

* Vasconcellos, lib. vi.

made a present of twenty *espadinas* or ducats of gold.* On his way Columbus stopped at the monastery of San Antonio, at Villa Franca, to visit the Queen, who had expressed an earnest wish to see this extraordinary and enterprising man, whose achievement was the theme of every tongue. He found her attended by a few of her favorite ladies, and experienced the most flattering reception. Her Majesty made him relate the principal events of his voyage and describe the countries he had found; and she and her ladies hung with eager curiosity upon his narration. That night he slept at Llandra, and being on the point of departing in the morning, a servant of the King arrived to attend him to the frontier, if he preferred to return to Spain by land, and to provide horses, lodgings, and everything he might stand in need of at the royal expense. The weather, however, having moderated, he preferred returning in his caravel. Putting to sea therefore on the 13th of March he arrived safely at the bar of Saltes on sunrise of the 15th, and at mid-day entered the harbor of Palos, whence he had sailed on the 3d of August in the preceding year, having taken

* Twenty-eight dollars in gold of the present day, and equivalent to seventy-four dollars, considering the depreciation of the precious metals.

not quite seven months and a half to accomplish this most momentous of all maritime enterprises.*

*Works generally consulted in this chapter: Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 17; *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 39, 40, 41; *Journal of Columbus*, Navarrete, tom. i.

Chapter V.

RECEPTION OF COLUMBUS AT PALOS.

[1493.]

THE triumphant return of Columbus was a prodigious event in the history of the little port of Palos, where everybody was more or less interested in the fate of his expedition. The most important and wealthy sea-captains of the place had engaged in it, and scarcely a family but had some relative and friend among the navigators. The departure of the ships upon what appeared a chimerical and desperate cruise, had spread gloom and dismay over the place, and the storms which had raged throughout the winter had heightened the public despondency. Many lamented their friends as lost, while imagination lent mysterious horrors to their fate, picturing them as driven about over wild and desert wastes of water without a shore, or as perishing amidst rocks and quicksands and whirlpools;

or a prey to those monsters of the deep with which credulity peopled every distant and unfrequented sea. There was something more awful in such a mysterious fate than in death itself under any defined and ordinary form.*

Great was the agitation of the inhabitants, therefore, when they beheld one of the ships standing up the river; but when they learnt that she returned in triumph from the discovery of a world the whole community broke forth into transports of joy. The bells were rung, the shops shut, all business was suspended; for a time there was nothing but hurry and tumult. Some were anxious to know the fate of a relative, others of a friend, and all to learn the particulars of so wonderful a voyage. When Columbus landed the multitude thronged to see and welcome him, and a grand procession was formed to the principal church to return thanks to God for so signal a discovery made by the people of that place—

* In the maps and charts of those times, and even in those of a much later date, the variety of formidable and hideous monsters depicted in all remote parts of the ocean, evince the terrors and dangers with which the imagination clothed it. The same may also be said of distant and unknown lands; the remote parts of Asia and Africa have monsters depicted in them which it would be difficult to trace to any originals in natural history.

forgetting, in their exultation, the thousand difficulties they had thrown in the way of the enterprise. Wherever Columbus passed he was hailed with shouts and acclamations. What a contrast to his departure a few months before, followed by murmurs and execrations; or rather, what a contrast to his first arrival at Palos, a poor pedestrian craving bread and water for his child at the gate of a convent!

Understanding that the court was at Barcelona he felt disposed to proceed thither immediately in his caravel; reflecting however, on the dangers and disasters he had already experienced on the seas he resolved to proceed by land. He despatched a letter to the King and Queen informing them of his arrival, and soon after departed for Seville to await their orders, taking with him six of the natives whom he had brought from the New World. One had died at sea, and three were left ill at Palos.

It is a singular coincidence, which appears to be well authenticated, that on the very evening of the arrival of Columbus at Palos, and while the peals of triumph were still ringing from its towers, the *Pinta*, commanded by Martin Alonzo Pinzon, likewise entered the river. After her separation from the Admiral in the storm she had been driven before the gale into the Bay of Biscay, and had made the port of

Bayonne. Doubting whether Columbus had survived the tempest, Pinzon had immediately written to the sovereigns, giving information of the discovery he had made, and had requested permission to come to court and communicate the particulars in person. As soon as the weather permitted he had again set sail, anticipating a triumphant reception in his native port of Palos. When, on entering the harbor, he beheld the vessel of the Admiral riding at anchor, and learnt the enthusiasm with which he was received, the heart of Pinzon died within him. It is said that he feared to meet Columbus in this hour of his triumph, lest he should put him under arrest for his desertion on the coast of Cuba, but he was a man of too much resolution to indulge in such a fear. It is more probable that a consciousness of his misconduct made him unwilling to appear before the public in the midst of their enthusiasm for Columbus, and perhaps he sickened at the honors heaped upon a man whose superiority he had been so unwilling to acknowledge. Getting into his boat, therefore, he landed privately and kept out of sight until he heard of the Admiral's departure. He then returned to his home broken in health, and deeply dejected, considering all the honors and eulogiums heaped upon Columbus as so many

reproaches on himself. The reply of the sovereigns to his letter at length arrived. It was of a reproachful tenor and forbade his appearance at court. This letter completed his humiliation; the anguish of his feelings gave virulence to his bodily malady and in a few days he died, a victim to deep chagrin.*

Let no one, however, indulge in hard censures over the grave of Pinzon! His merits and services are entitled to the highest praise; his errors should be regarded with indulgence. He was one of the foremost in Spain to appreciate the project of Columbus, animating him by his concurrence and aiding him with his purse, when poor and unknown at Palos. He afterwards enabled him to procure and fit out ships, when even the mandates of the sovereigns were ineffectual; and finally embarked in the expedition with his brothers and his friends, staking life, property, everything upon the event. He thus entitled himself to participate largely in the glory of this immortal enterprise; but, unfortunately, forgetting for a moment the grandeur of the cause and the implicit obedience due to his commander, he yielded to the incitements of self-interest and committed that act of insubordination which

* Muñoz, *Hist. N. Mundo*, lib. iv., § 14. Charlevoix, *Hist. St. Domingo*, lib. ii.

has cast a shade upon his name. In extenuation of his fault, however, may be alleged his habits of command, which rendered him impatient of control; his consciousness of having rendered great services to the expedition, and of possessing property in the ships. That he was a man of great professional merit is admitted by all his contemporaries; that he naturally possessed generous sentiments and an honorable ambition is evident from the poignancy with which he felt the disgrace drawn on him by his misconduct.* A mean man would not have fallen a victim to self-upbraiding

* After a lapse of years, the descendants of the Pinzons made strenuous representations to the Crown of the merits and services of their family, endeavoring to prove, among other things, that but for the aid and the encouragement of Martin Alonzo and his brothers, Columbus would never have made his discovery. Some of the testimony rendered on this and another occasion was rather extravagant and absurd, as will be shown in another part of this work.* The Emperor Charles V., however, taking into consideration the real services of the brothers in the first voyage, and the subsequent expeditions and discoveries of that able and intrepid navigator Vicente Yañez Pinzon, granted to the family the well-merited rank and privileges of *Hidalguia*, a degree of nobility which constituted them noble (*hidalgos*), with the right of perfixing the title of Don to their names. A coat-of-arms was also given them, emblematical of their ser-

* *Vide* Appendix, article "Martin Alonzo Pinzon."

for having been convicted of a mean action. His story shows how one lapse from duty may counterbalance the merits of a thousand services; how one moment of weakness may mar the beauty of a whole life of virtue; and how important it is for a man under all circumstances to be true not merely to others but to himself.

vices as discoverers. These privileges and arms are carefully preserved by the family at the present day.

The Pinzons at present reside principally in the little city of Moguer, about a league from Palos, and possess vineyards and estates about the neighborhood. They are in easy, if not affluent, circumstances, and inhabit the best houses in Moguer. Here they have continued, from generation to generation, since the time of the discovery, filling places of public trust and dignity, enjoying the good opinion and good-will of their fellow-citizens, and flourishing in nearly the same state in which they were found by Columbus on his first visit to Palos. It is rare, indeed, to find a family, in this fluctuating world, so little changed by the revolutions of nearly three centuries and a half.

Whatever Palos may have been in the time of Columbus, it is now a paltry village of about four hundred inhabitants, who subsist chiefly by laboring in the fields and vineyards. The convent of La Rabida still exists, but is inhabited merely by two friars, with a novitiate and a lay brother. It is situated on a hill surrounded by a scattered forest of pine trees, and overlooks the low sandy country of the sea-coast and the windings of the river by which Columbus sallied forth upon the ocean.

Chapter VI.

RECEPTION OF COLUMBUS BY THE SPANISH COURT AT BARCELONA.

THE letter of Columbus to the Spanish monarchs had produced the greatest sensation at court. The event he announced was considered the most extraordinary of their prosperous reign, and following so close upon the conquest of Granada, was pronounced a signal mark of divine favor for that triumph achieved in the cause of the true faith. The sovereigns themselves were for a time dazzled by this sudden and easy acquisition of a new empire, of indefinite extent and apparently boundless wealth; and their first idea was to secure it beyond the reach of dispute. Shortly after his arrival in Seville, Columbus received a letter from them expressing their great delight, and requesting him to repair immediately to court, to concert

plans for a second and more extensive expedition. As the summer, the time favorable for a voyage, was approaching, they desired him to make any arrangements at Seville or elsewhere that might hasten the expedition, and to inform them, by the return of the courier, what was to be done on their part. This letter was addressed to him by the title of "Don Christopher Columbus, our Admiral of the ocean sea, and Viceroy and Governor of the islands discovered in the Indies"; at the same time he was promised still further rewards. Columbus lost no time in complying with the commands of the sovereigns. He sent a memorandum of the ships, men, and munitions requisite, and having made such dispositions at Seville as circumstances permitted, set out for Barcelona, taking with him the six Indians, and the various curiosities and productions from the New World.

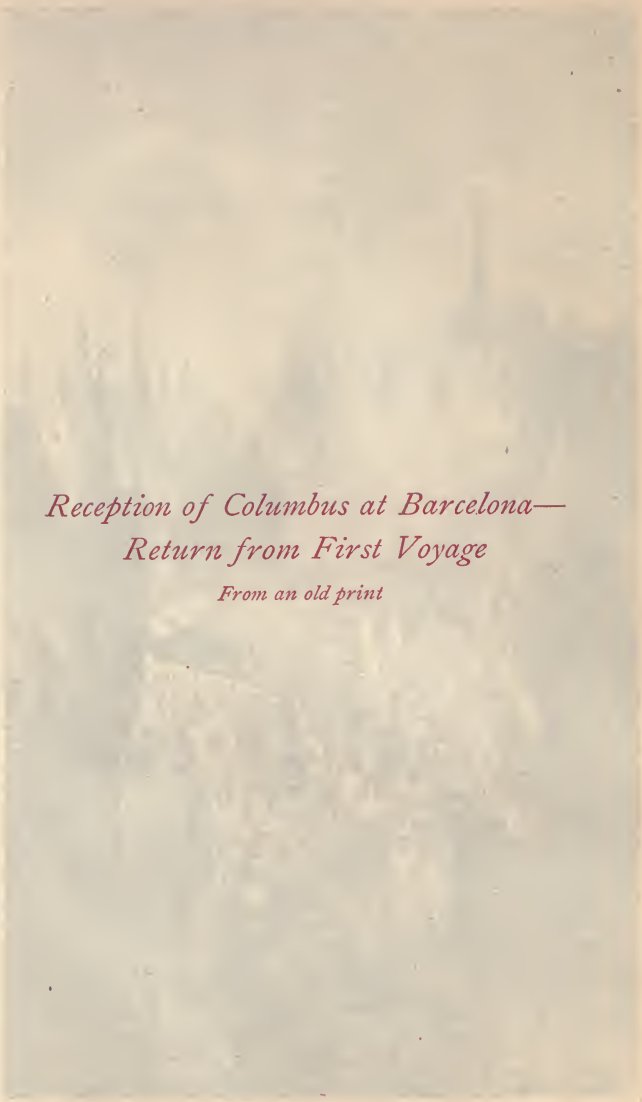
The fame of his discovery had resounded throughout the nation, and as his route lay through several of the finest and most populous provinces of Spain, his journey appeared like the progress of a sovereign. Wherever he passed, the country poured forth its inhabitants, who lined the road and thronged the villages. The streets, windows, and balconies of the towns were thronged with eager spec-

tators, who rent the air with acclamations. His journey was continually impeded by the multitude pressing to gain a sight of him and of the Indians, who were regarded with as much astonishment as if they had been natives of another planet. It was impossible to satisfy the craving curiosity which assailed him and his attendants at every stage with innumerable questions; popular rumor, as usual, had exaggerated the truth, and had filled the newly found country with all kinds of wonders.

About the middle of April Columbus arrived at Barcelona, where every preparation had been made to give him a solemn and magnificent reception. The beauty and serenity of the weather in that genial season and favored climate, contributed to give splendor to this memorable ceremony. As he drew near the place many of the youthful courtiers and *hidalgos*, together with a vast concourse of the populace, came forth to meet and welcome him. His entrance into this noble city has been compared to one of those triumphs which the Romans were accustomed to decree to conquerors. First were paraded the Indians, painted according to their savage fashion and decorated with their national ornaments of gold. After these were borne various kinds

of live parrots, together with stuffed birds and animals of unknown species, and rare plants supposed to be of precious qualities; while great care was taken to make a conspicuous display of Indian coronets, bracelets, and other decorations of gold, which might give an idea of the wealth of the newly discovered regions. After this followed Columbus on horseback, surrounded by a brilliant cavalcade of Spanish chivalry. The streets were almost impassable from the countless multitude; the windows and balconies were crowded with the fair; the very roofs were covered with spectators. It seemed as if the public eye could not be sated with gazing on these trophies of an unknown world, or on the remarkable man by whom it had been discovered. There was a sublimity in this event that mingled a solemn feeling with the public joy. It was looked upon as a vast and signal dispensation of Providence, in reward for the piety of the monarchs; and the majestic and venerable appearance of the discoverer, so different from the youth and buoyancy generally expected from roving enterprise, seemed in harmony with the grandeur and dignity of his achievement.

To receive him with suitable pomp and distinction, the sovereigns had ordered their throne to be placed in public, under a rich



Reception of Columbus at Barcelona—
Return from First Voyage

From an old print

canopy of brocade of gold, in a vast and splendid saloon. Here the King and Queen awaited his arrival, seated in state, with the Prince Juan beside them, and attended by the dignitaries of their court, and the principal nobility of Castile, Valentia, Catalonia, and Arragon, all impatient to behold the man who had conferred so incalculable a benefit upon the nation. At length Columbus entered the hall, surrounded by a brilliant crowd of cavaliers, among whom, says Las Casas, he was conspicuous for his stately and commanding person, which, with his countenance, rendered venerable by his gray hairs, gave him the august appearance of a senator of Rome. A modest smile lighted up his features, showing that he enjoyed the state and glory in which he came*; and certainly nothing could be more deeply moving to a mind inflamed by noble ambition, and conscious of having greatly deserved, than these testimonials of the admiration and gratitude of a nation, or rather of a world. As Columbus approached, the sovereigns rose, as if receiving a person of the highest rank. Bending his knees, he offered to kiss their hands; but there was some hesitation on their part to permit this act of homage. Raising him in the most gracious

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 78, MS.

manner, they ordered him to seat himself in their presence ; a rare honor in this proud and punctilious court.*

At their request, he now gave an account of the most striking events of the voyage, and a description of the islands discovered. He displayed specimens of unknown birds, and other animals ; of rare plants of medicinal and aromatic virtues ; of native gold in dust, in crude masses, or labored into barbaric ornaments ; and, above all, the natives of these countries, who were objects of intense and inexhaustible interest. All these he pronounced mere harbingers of greater discoveries yet to be made, which would add realms of incalculable wealth to the dominions of their Majesties, and whole nations of proselytes to the true faith.

When he had finished the sovereigns sank on their knees, and raising their clasped hands to Heaven, their eyes filled with tears of joy and gratitude, poured forth thanks and praises to God for so great a providence. All present followed their example ; a deep and solemn enthusiasm pervaded that splendid assembly, and prevented all common acclamations of triumph. The anthem *Te Deum laudamus*, chanted by the choir of the royal chapel, with

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 78. *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 81.

the accompaniment of instruments, rose in full body of sacred harmony; bearing up, as it were, the feelings and thoughts of the auditors to Heaven, "so that," says the venerable Las Casas, "it seemed as if in that hour they communicated with celestial delight." Such was the solemn and pious manner in which the brilliant court of Spain celebrated this sublime event; offering up a grateful tribute of melody and praise, and giving glory to God for the discovery of another world.

When Columbus retired from the royal presence, he was attended to his residence by all the court and followed by the shouting populace. For many days he was the object of universal curiosity, and wherever he appeared was surrounded by an admiring multitude.

While his mind was teeming with glorious anticipations, his pious scheme for the deliverance of the Holy Sepulchre was not forgotten. It has been shown that he suggested it to the Spanish sovereigns, at the time of first making his propositions, holding it forth as the great object to be effected by the profits of his discoveries. Flushed with the idea of the vast wealth now to accrue to himself, he made a vow to furnish within seven years an army, consisting of four thousand horse and fifty thousand foot, for the rescue of the Holy

Sepulchre, and a similar force within the five following years. This vow was recorded in one of his letters to the sovereigns, to which he refers, but which is no longer extant; nor is it certain whether it was made at the end of his first voyage, or at a subsequent date when the magnitude and wealthy result of his discoveries became more fully manifest. He often alludes to it vaguely in his writings, and he refers to it expressly in a letter to Pope Alexander VI., written in 1502, in which he accounts also for its non-fulfilment. It is essential to a full comprehension of the character and motives of Columbus, that this visionary project should be borne in recollection. It will be found to have entwined itself in his mind with his enterprise of discovery, and that a holy crusade was to be the consummation of those divine purposes, for which he considered himself selected by Heaven as an agent. It shows how much his mind was elevated above selfish and mercenary views—how it was filled with those devout and heroic schemes, which in the time of the crusades had inflamed the thoughts and directed the enterprises of the bravest warriors and most illustrious princes.

Chapter VII.

SOJOURN OF COLUMBUS AT BARCELONA—ATTENTIONS PAID HIM BY THE SOVEREIGNS AND COURTIERS.

THE joy occasioned by the great discovery of Columbus was not confined to Spain; the tidings were spread far and wide by the communications of ambassadors, the correspondence of the learned, the negotiations of merchants, and the reports of travellers, and the whole civilized world was filled with wonder and delight. How gratifying would it have been, had the press at that time, as at present, poured forth its daily tide of speculation on every passing occurrence! With what eagerness should we seek to know the first ideas and emotions of the public, on an event so unlooked-for and sublime! Even the first announcements of it by contemporary writers, though brief and incidental, derive interest from being written at the time, and from showing the casual way

in which such great tidings were conveyed about the world. Allegretto Allegretti, in his annals of Sienna for 1493, mentions it as just make known there by the letters of their merchants who were in Spain, and by the mouths of various travellers.* The news was brought to Genoa by the return of her ambassadors, Francisco Marchesi and Giovanni Antonio Grimaldi, and was recorded among the triumphant events of the year †; for the Republic, though she may have slighted the opportunity of making herself mistress of the discovery, has ever since been tenacious of the glory of having given birth to the discoverer. The tidings were soon carried to England, which as yet was but a maritime power of inferior importance. They caused, however, much wonder in London, and great talk and admiration in the court of Henry VII., where the discovery was pronounced "a thing more divine than human." We have this on the authority of Sebastian Cabot himself, the future discoverer of the northern continent of America, who was in London at the time, and was inspired by the event with a generous spirit of emulation.‡

* Diarj Senesi de Alleg. Allegretti. Muratori, *Ital. Script.*, tom. xxiii.

† Foglieta, *Istoria de Genova*, lib. ii.

‡ Hackluyt, *Collect. Voyages*, vol. iii., p. 7.

Every member of civilized society, in fact, rejoiced in the occurrence as one in which he was more or less interested. To some it opened a new and unbounded field of inquiry; to others, of enterprise; and every one awaited with intense eagerness the further development of this unknown world, still covered with mystery, the partial glimpses of which were so full of wonder. We have a brief testimony of the emotions of the learned in a letter written at the time by Peter Martyr, to his friend Pomponius Lætus.

"You tell me, my amiable Pomponius," he writes, "that you leap for joy, and that your delight was mingled with tears when you read my epistle, certifying to you the hitherto hidden world of the antipodes. You have felt and acted as became a man eminent for learning, for I can conceive no aliment more delicious than such tidings to a cultivated and ingenuous mind. I feel a wonderful exultation of spirits when I converse with intelligent men who have returned from these regions. It is like an accession of wealth to a miser. Our minds, soiled and debased by the common concerns of life and the vices of society, become elevated and ameliorated by contemplating such glorious events." *

Notwithstanding this universal enthusiasm, however, no one was aware of the real importance of the discovery. No one had an idea

* Letters of P. Martyr, let. 153.

that this was a totally distinct portion of the globe, separated by oceans from the ancient world. The opinion of Columbus was universally adopted, that Cuba was the end of the Asiatic continent, and that the adjacent islands were in the Indian seas. This agreed with the opinions of the ancients, heretofore cited, about the moderate distance from Spain to the extremity of India, sailing westwardly. The parrots were also thought to resemble those described by Pliny, as abounding in the remote parts of Asia. The lands, therefore, which Columbus had visited were called the West Indies; and as he seemed to have entered upon a vast region of unexplored countries, existing in a state of nature, the whole received the comprehensive appellation of "The New World."

During the whole of his sojourn at Barcelona the sovereigns took every occasion to bestow on Columbus personal marks of their high consideration. He was admitted at all times to the royal presence, and the Queen delighted to converse with him on the subject of his enterprises. The King too appeared occasionally on horseback, with Prince Juan on one side and Columbus on the other. To perpetuate in his family the glory of his achievement, a coat-of-arms was assigned him in which the royal

arms, the castle and the lion, were quartered with his proper bearings, which were a group of islands surrounded by waves. To these arms was afterwards annexed the motto:

A Castilla y á Leon,
Nuevo mundo dio Colon.
(To Castile and Leon
Columbus gave a new world).

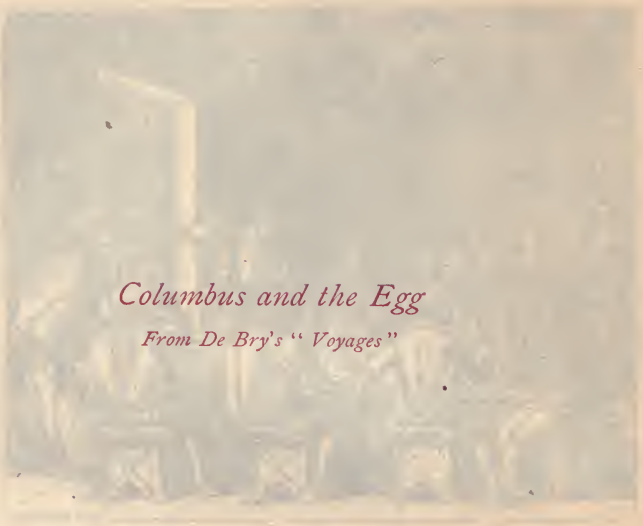
The pension which had been decreed by the sovereigns to him who in the first voyage should discover land, was adjudged to Columbus, for having first seen the light on the shore. It is said that the seaman who first descried the land, was so incensed at being disappointed of what he conceived his merited reward, that he renounced his country and his faith, and going into Africa turned Mussulman; an anecdote which rests merely on the authority of Oviedo* who is extremely incorrect in his narrative of this voyage, and inserts many falsehoods told him by the enemies of the Admiral.

It may, at first sight, appear but little accordant with the acknowledged magnanimity of Columbus, to have borne away the prize from this poor sailor, but this was a subject in which his whole ambition was involved, and

* Oviedo, *Cronico de las Indias*, lib. ii., cap. 2.

he was doubtless proud of the honor of being personally the discoverer of the land as well as projector of the enterprise.

Next to the countenance shown him by the King and Queen, may be mentioned that of Pedro Gonzalez de Mendoza, the Grand Cardinal of Spain, and first subject of the realm; a man whose elevated character for piety, learning, and high prince-like qualities, gave signal value to his favors. He invited Columbus to a banquet, where he assigned him the most honorable place at table, and had him served with the ceremonials which in those punctilious times were observed towards sovereigns. At this repast is said to have occurred the well-known anecdote of the egg. A shallow courtier present, impatient of the honors paid to Columbus and meanly jealous of him as a foreigner, abruptly asked him whether he thought that in case he had not discovered the Indies, there were not other men in Spain who would have been capable of the enterprise? To this Columbus made no immediate reply, but taking an egg, invited the company to make it stand on one end. Every one attempted it, but in vain; whereupon he struck it upon the table so as to break the end, and left it standing on the broken part; illustrating in this simple manner, that when he had once



Columbus and the Egg

From De Bry's "Voyages"

shown the way to the New World, nothing was easier than to follow it.*

The favor shown Columbus by the sovereigns, insured him for a time the caresses of the nobility ; for in a court every one vies with his neighbor in lavishing attentions upon the man "whom the king delighteth to honor." Columbus bore all these caresses and distinctions with becoming modesty, though he must have felt a proud satisfaction in the idea that they had been wrested, as it were, from the nation, by his courage and perseverance. One can hardly recognize in the individual thus made the companion of princes and the theme of general wonder and admiration, the same obscure stranger, who but a short time before had been a common scoff and jest in this very court, derided by some as an adventurer, and pointed at by others as a madman. Those who had treated him with contumely during his long course of solicitation, now sought to efface the remembrance of it by adulations. Every one who had given him a little cold counte-

* This anecdote rests on the authority of the Italian historian Benzoni, (lib. i., p. 12, ed. Venetia, 1572). It has been condemned as trivial, but the simplicity of the reproof constitutes its severity, and was characteristic of the practical sagacity of Columbus. The universal popularity of the anecdote is a proof of its merit.

nance, or a few courtly smiles, now arrogated to himself the credit of having been a patron, and of having promoted the discovery of the New World. Scarce a great man about the court, but has been enrolled by his historian or biographer among the benefactors of Columbus; though, had one tenth part of this boasted patronage been really exerted, he would never have had to linger seven years soliciting for an armament of three caravels. Columbus knew well the weakness of the patronage that had been given him. The only friends mentioned by him with gratitude, in his after letters, as having been really zealous and effective, were those two worthy friars, Diego de Deza, afterwards Bishop of Palencia and Seville, and Juan Perez, the prior of the convent of La Rabida.

Thus honored by the sovereigns, courted by the great, idolized by the people, Columbus for a time drank the honeyed draught of popularity, before enmity and detraction had time to drug it with bitterness. His discovery burst with such sudden splendor upon the world as to dazzle envy itself, and to call forth the general acclamations of mankind. Well would it be for the honor of human nature could history, like romance, close with the consummation of the hero's wishes; we should then

leave Columbus in the full fruition of great and well-merited prosperity. But his history is destined to furnish another proof, if proof be wanting, of the inconstancy of public favor, even when won by distinguished services. No greatness was ever acquired by more incontestible, unalloyed, and exalted benefits rendered to mankind, yet none ever drew on its possessor more unremitting jealousy and defamation; or involved him in more unmerited distress and difficulty. Thus it is with illustrious merit: its very effulgence draws forth the rancorous passions of low and grovelling minds, which too often have a temporary influence in obscuring it to the world,—as the sun emerging with full splendor into the heavens, calls up by the very fervor of its rays, the rank and noxious vapors which for a time becloud its glory.

Appendix.

A VISIT TO PALOS.

[The following narrative was actually commenced by the author of this work, as a letter to a friend, but unexpectedly swelled to its present size. He has been induced to insert it here from the idea, that many will feel the same curiosity to know something of the present state of Palos and its inhabitants that led him to make the journey.]

SEVILLE, 1828.

SINCE I last wrote you, I have made what I may term an American pilgrimage, to visit the little port of Palos in Andalusia, where Columbus fitted out his ships, and whence he sailed for the discovery of the New World. Need I tell you how deeply interesting and gratifying it has been to me? I had long meditated this excursion, as a kind of pious, and, if I may so say, filial duty of an American, and my intention was quickened when I learnt that many of the edifices mentioned in the *History of Columbus* still remained in nearly the same state in which they existed at the time of his sojourn at Palos, and that the descendants of the intrepid Pinzons, who aided him with ships and

money, and sailed with him in the great voyage of discovery, still flourished in the neighborhood.

The very evening before my departure from Seville on the excursion, I heard that there was a young gentleman of the Pinzon family studying law in the city. I got introduced to him, and found him of most prepossessing appearance and manners. He gave me a letter of introduction to his father, Don Juan Fernandez Pinzon, resident of Moguer, and the present head of the family.

As it was in the middle of August, and the weather intensely hot, I hired a *calesa* for the journey. This is a two-wheeled carriage, resembling a cabriolet, but of the most primitive and rude construction; the harness is profusely ornamented with brass, and the horse's head decorated with tufts and tassels and dangling bobs of scarlet and yellow worsted. I had for *calasero*, a tall, long-legged Andalusian, in short jacket, little round-crowned hat, breeches decorated with buttons from the hip to the knees, and a pair of russet leather *bottinas* or spatterdashes. He was an active fellow, though uncommonly taciturn for an Andalusian, and strode along beside his horse, rousing him occasionally to greater speed by a loud malediction or a hearty thwack of his cudgel.

In this style I set off late in the day to avoid the noontide heat, and after ascending the lofty range of hills which borders the great valley of the Guadal-

quivir, and having a rough ride among their heights, I descended about twilight into one of those vast, silent, melancholy plains, frequent in Spain, where I beheld no other signs of life than a roaming flock of bustards, and a distant herd of cattle, guarded by a solitary herdsman, who, with a long pike planted in the earth, stood motionless in the midst of the dreary landscape, resembling an Arab of the desert. The night had somewhat advanced when we stopped to repose for a few hours at a solitary *venta* or inn, if it might so be called, being nothing more than a vast low-roofed stable, divided into several compartments, for the reception of the troops of mules and *arrieros* (or carriers) who carry on the internal trade of Spain. Accommodation for the traveller there was none—not even for a traveller so easily accommodated as myself. The landlord had no food to give me, and as to a bed, he had none but a horse-cloth, on which his only child, a boy of eight years old, lay naked on the earthern floor. Indeed the heat of the weather and the fumes from the stables made the interior of the hovel insupportable; so I was fain to bivouack on my cloak on the pavement at the door of the *venta*, where, on waking, after two or three hours of sound sleep, I found a *contrabandista* (or smuggler) snoring beside me, with his blunderbuss on his arm.

I resumed my journey before break of day, and had made several leagues by ten o'clock, when we stopped

to breakfast and to pass the sultry hours of mid-day in a large village; whence we departed about four o'clock, and after passing through the same kind of solitary country arrived just after sunset at Moguer. This little city (for at present it is a city) is situated about a league from Palos, of which place it has gradually absorbed all the respectable inhabitants, and among the number the whole family of Pinzons.

So remote is this little place from the stir and bustle of travel, and so destitute of the show and vainglory of this world, that my *calesa*, as it rattled and jingled along the narrow and ill-paved streets, caused a great sensation; the children shouted and scampered along by its side, admiring its splendid trappings of brass and worsted, and gazing with reverence at the important stranger who came in so gorgeous an equipage.

I drove up to the principal *posada*, the landlord of which was at the door. He was one of the very civilest men in the world, and disposed to do everything in his power to make me comfortable; there was only one difficulty, he had neither bed nor bedroom in his house. In fact it was a mere *venta* for muleteers, who are accustomed to sleep on the ground with their mule-cloths for beds and pack-saddles for pillows. It was a hard case, but there was no better *posada* in the place. Few people travel for pleasure or curiosity in these out-of-the-way parts of Spain, and those of any note are generally received into private

houses. I had travelled sufficiently in Spain to find out that a bed, after all, is not an article of indispensable necessity, and was about to bespeak some quiet corner where I might spread my cloak, but fortunately the landlord's wife came forth. She could not have a more obliging disposition than her husband, but then —God bless the women !—they always know how to carry their good wishes into effect. In a little while a small room, about ten feet square, which had formed a thoroughfare between the stables and a kind of shop or bar-room, was cleared of a variety of lumber, and I was assured that a bed should be put up there for me. From the consultation I saw my hostess holding with some of her neighbor gossips, I fancied the bed was to be a kind of piecemeal contribution among them for the credit of the house.

As soon as I could change my dress I commenced the historical researches which were the object of my journey, and inquired for the abode of Don Juan Fernandez Pinzon. My obliging landlord himself volunteered to conduct me thither, and I set off full of animation at the thoughts of meeting with the lineal representative of one of the coadjutors of Columbus.

A short walk brought us to the house, which was most respectable in its appearance, indicating easy, if not affluent, circumstances. The door, as is customary in Spanish villages during summer, stood wide open. We entered with the usual salutation, or rather

summons, "Ave Maria!" A trim Andalusian handmaid answered to the call, and, on our inquiring for the master of the house, led the way across a little *patio* or court, in the centre of the edifice, cooled by a fountain surrounded by shrubs and flowers, to a back court or terrace likewise set out with flowers, where Don Juan Fernandez was seated with his family, enjoying the serene evening in the open air.

I was much pleased with his appearance. He was a venerable old gentleman, tall, and somewhat thin, with fair complexion and gray hair. He received me with great urbanity, and on reading the letter from his son, appeared struck with surprise to find I had come quite to Moguer merely to visit the scene of the embarkation of Columbus; and still more so on my telling him that one of my leading objects of curiosity was his own family connection; for it would seem that the worthy cavalier had troubled his head but little about the enterprises of his ancestors.

I now took my seat in the domestic circle, and soon felt myself quite at home, for there is generally a frankness in the hospitality of Spaniards, that soon puts a stranger at his ease beneath their roof. The wife of Don Juan Fernandez was extremely amiable and affable, possessing much of that natural aptness for which the Spanish women are remarkable. In the course of conversation with them I learnt that Don Juan Fernandez, who is seventy-two years of age, is

the oldest of five brothers, all of whom are married, have numerous offspring, and live in Moguer and its vicinity, in nearly the same condition and rank of life as at the time of the discovery. This agreed with what I had previously heard respecting the families of the discoverers. Of Columbus no lineal and direct descendant exists; his was an exotic stock which never took deep and lasting root in the country; but the race of the Pinzons continues to thrive and multiply in its native soil.

While I was yet conversing, a gentleman entered who was introduced to me as Don Luiz Fernandez Pinzon, the youngest of the brothers. He appeared between fifty and sixty years of age, somewhat robust, with fair complexion, gray hair, and a frank and manly deportment. He is the only one of the present generation that has followed the ancient profession of the family; having served with great applause as an officer of the royal navy, from which he retired on his marriage about twenty-two years since. He is the one also who takes the greatest interest and pride in the historical honors of his house, carefully preserving all the legends and documents of the achievements and distinctions of his family, a manuscript volume of which he lent to me for my inspection.

Don Juan now expressed a wish that during my residence in Moguer I would make his house my home. I endeavored to excuse myself, alleging that the

good people at the *posada* had been at such extraordinary trouble in preparing quarters for me, that I did not like to disappoint them. The worthy old gentleman undertook to arrange all this, and, while supper was preparing, we walked together to the *posada*. I found that my obliging host and hostess had indeed exerted themselves to an uncommon degree. An old rickety table had been spread out in a corner of the room as a bedstead, on top of which was propped up a grand *cama de luxo*, or state bed, which appeared to be the admiration of the house. I could not, for the soul of me, appear to undervalue what the poor people had prepared with such hearty good-will, and considered such a triumph of art and luxury; so I again entreated Don Juan to dispense with my sleeping at his house, promising most faithfully to take my meals there whilst I should stay at Moguer, and as the old gentleman understood my motives for declining his invitation, and felt a good-humored sympathy in them, we readily arranged the matter. I returned therefore with Don Juan to his house and supped with his family. During the repast a plan was agreed upon for my visit to Palos, and to the convent of La Rabida in which Don Juan volunteered to accompany me and be my guide, and the following day was allotted to the expedition. We were to breakfast at an *hacienda*, or country-seat, which he possessed in the vicinity of Palos, in the midst of his vineyards, and were to dine

there on our return from the convent. These arrangements being made, we parted for the night. I returned to the *posada* highly gratified with my visit, and slept soundly in the extraordinary bed which, I may almost say, had been invented for my accommodation.

On the following morning, bright and early, Don Juan Fernandez and myself set off in the *calesa* for Palos. I felt apprehensive at first, that the kind-hearted old gentleman, in his anxiety to oblige, had left his bed at too early an hour, and was exposing himself to fatigues unsuited to his age. He laughed at the idea, and assured me that he was an early riser, and accustomed to all kinds of exercise on horse and foot, being a keen sportsman, and frequently passing days together among the mountains, on shooting expeditions, taking with him servants, horses, and provisions, and living in a tent. He appeared, in fact, to be of an active habit, and to possess a youthful vivacity of spirit. His cheerful disposition rendered our morning drive extremely agreeable; his urbanity was shown to every one whom we met on the road; even the common peasant was saluted by him with the appellation of *caballero*, a mark of respect ever gratifying to the poor but proud Spaniard, when yielded by a superior.

As the tide was out we drove along the flat grounds bordering the Tinto. The river was on our right,

while on our left was a range of hills, jutting out into promontories, one beyond the other, and covered with vineyards and fig-trees. The weather was serene, the air soft and balmy, and the landscape of that gentle kind calculated to put one in a quiet and happy humor. We passed close by the skirts of Palos, and drove to the *hacienda*, which is situated at some little distance from the village, between it and the river. The house is a low stone building, well white-washed, and of great length; one end being fitted up as a summer residence, with saloons, bedrooms, and a domestic chapel; and the other as a *bodega*, or magazine for the reception of the wine produced on the estate.

The house stands on a hill, amidst vineyards which are supposed to cover a part of the site of the ancient town of Palos, now shrunk to a miserable village. Beyond these vineyards, on the crest of a distant hill, are seen the white walls of the convent of La Rabida rising above a dark wood of pine trees.

Below the *hacienda* flows the river Tinto, on which Columbus embarked. It is divided by a low tongue of land, or rather the sand-bar of Saltes, from the river Odiel, with which it soon mingles its waters and flows on to the ocean. Beside this sand-bar, where the channel of the river runs deep, the squadron of Columbus was anchored, and thence he made sail on the morning of his departure.

The soft breeze that was blowing scarcely ruffled

the surface of this beautiful river; two or three picturesque barks, called mystics, with long latine sails, were gliding down it. A little aid of the imagination might suffice to picture them as the light caravels of Columbus sallying forth on their eventful expedition, while the distant bells of the town of Huelva which were ringing melodiously, might be supposed as cheering the voyagers with a farewell peal.

I cannot express to you what were my feelings on treading the shore which had once been animated with the bustle of departure, and whose sands had been printed by the last footsteps of Columbus. The solemn and sublime nature of the event that had followed, together with the fate and fortunes of those concerned in it, filled the mind with vague yet melancholy ideas. It was like viewing the silent and empty stage of some great drama when all the actors have departed. The very aspect of the landscape, so tranquilly beautiful, had an effect upon me; and as I paced the deserted shores by the side of a descendant of one of the discoverers, I felt my heart swelling with emotion, and my eyes filling with tears.

What surprised me was to find no semblance of a sea-port; there was neither wharf nor landing-place —nothing but a naked river-bank with the hulk of a ferry-boat, which I was told carried passengers to Huelva, lying high and dry on the sands, deserted by the tide. Palos, though it has doubtless dwindled

away from its former size, can never have been important as to extent and population. If it possessed warehouses on the beach they have disappeared. It is at present a mere village of the poorest kind and lies nearly a quarter of a mile from the river, in a hollow among the hills. It contains a few hundred inhabitants who subsist principally by laboring in the fields and vineyards. Its race of merchants and mariners is extinct. There are no vessels belonging to the place, nor any show of traffic, excepting at the season of fruit and wine, when a few mystics and other light barks anchor in the river to collect the produce of the neighborhood. The people are totally ignorant, and it is probable that the greater part of them scarce know even the name of America. Such is the place whence sallied forth the enterprise for the discovery of the western world!

We were now summoned to breakfast in a little saloon of the *hacienda*. The table was covered with natural luxuries produced upon the spot—fine purple and muscatel grapes from the adjacent vineyard, delicious melons from the garden, and generous wines made on the estate. The repast was heightened by the genial manners of my hospitable host, who appeared to possess the most enviable cheerfulness of spirit and simplicity of heart.

After breakfast we set off in the *calesa* to visit the convent of La Rabida, about half a league distant.

The road, for a part of the way, lay through the vineyards, and was deep and sandy. The *calasero* had been at his wit's end to conceive what motive a stranger like myself, apparently travelling for mere amusement, could have in coming so far to see so miserable a place as Palos, which he set down as one of the very poorest places in the whole world; but this additional toil and struggle through deep sand to visit the old convent of La Rabida completed his confusion—"Hombre!" exclaimed he, "es una ruina! no hay mas que dos frailes!" ("Zounds! why it's a ruin! there are only two friars there!") Don Juan laughed, and told him that I had come all the way from Seville precisely to see that old ruin and those two friars. The *calasero* made the Spaniard's last reply when he is perplexed—he shrugged his shoulders and crossed himself. After ascending a hill and passing through the skirts of a straggling pine wood we arrived in front of the convent. It stands in a bleak and solitary situation, on the brow of a rocky height or promontory, overlooking to the west a wide range of sea and land, bounded by the frontier mountains of Portugal, about eight leagues distant. The convent is shut out from a view of the vineyard of Palos by the gloomy forest of pines already mentioned, which cover the promontory to the east and darken the whole landscape in that direction.

There is nothing remarkable in the architecture of

the convent. Part of it is Gothic, but the edifice having been frequently repaired, and being white washed, according to a universal custom in Andalusia inherited from the Moors, has not that venerable aspect which might be expected from its antiquity.

We alighted at the gate where Columbus, when a poor pedestrian, a stranger in the land, asked bread and water for his child! As long as the convent stands this must be a spot calculated to awaken the most thrilling interest. The gate remains apparently in nearly the same state as at the time of his visit, but there is no longer a porter at hand to administer to the wants of the wayfarer. The door stood wide open, and admitted us into a small court-yard. Thence we passed through a Gothic portal into the chapel, without seeing a human being. We then traversed two interior cloisters equally vacant and silent, and bearing a look of neglect and dilapidation. From an open window we had a peep at what had once been a garden, but that had also gone to ruin; the walls were broken and thrown down; a few shrubs, and a scattered fig-tree or two, were all the traces of cultivation that remained. We passed through the long dormitories, but the cells were shut up and abandoned; we saw no living thing except a solitary cat stealing across a distant corridor, which fled in a panic at the unusual sight of strangers. At length, after patrolling nearly the whole of the empty building to the echo of our

own footsteps, we came to where the door of a cell, being partly open, gave us the sight of a monk within, seated at a table writing. He rose, and received us with much civility, and conducted us to the superior, who was reading in an adjacent cell. They were both rather young men, and together with a novitiate and a lay-brother, who officiated as cook, formed the whole community of the convent.

Don Juan Fernandez communicated to them the object of my visit, and my desire also to inspect the archives of the convent, to find if there was any record of the sojourn of Columbus. They informed us that the archives had been entirely destroyed by the French. The younger monk however, who had perused them, had a vague recollection of various particulars concerning the transactions of Columbus at Palos, his visit to the convent, and the sailing of his expedition. From all that he cited however, it appeared to me that all the information on the subject contained in the archives had been extracted from Herrera and other well-known authors. The monk was talkative and eloquent, and soon diverged from the subject of Columbus to one which he considered of infinitely greater importance—the miraculous image of the Virgin possessed by their convent and known by the name of "Our Lady of La Rabida." He gave us a history of the wonderful way in which the image had been found buried in the earth, where it had lain hidden for ages,

since the time of the conquest of Spain by the Moors; the disputes between the convent and different places in the neighborhood for the possession of it; the marvellous protection it extended to the adjacent country, especially in preventing all madness, either in man or dog, for this malady was anciently so prevalent in this place as to gain it the appellation of La Rabia, by which it was originally called, a name which, thanks to the beneficent influence of the Virgin, it no longer merited nor retained. Such are the legends and relics with which every convent in Spain is enriched, which are zealously cried up by the monks, and devoutly credited by the populace.

Twice a year on the festival of Our Lady of La Rabida, and on that of the patron saint of the order, the solitude and silence of the convent are interrupted by the intrusion of a swarming multitude, composed of the inhabitants of Moguer, of Huelva, and the neighboring plains and mountains. The open esplanade in front of the edifice resembles a fair, the adjacent forest teems with the motley throng, and the image of Our Lady of La Rabida is borne forth in triumphant procession.

While the friar was thus dilating upon the merits and renown of the image, I amused myself with those day dreams, or conjurings of the imagination, to which I am a little given. As the internal arrangements of convents are apt to be the same from age to age, I

pictured to myself this chamber as the same inhabited by the guardian Juan Perez de Marchena, at the time of the visit of Columbus. Why might not the old and ponderous table before me be the very one on which he displayed his conjectural maps, and expounded his theory of a western route to India? It required but another stretch of the imagination to assemble the little conclave around the table; Juan Perez, the friar; Garcia Fernandez, the physician, and Martin Alonzo Pinzon, the bold navigator, all listening with rapt attention to Columbus, or to the tale of some old seaman of Palos, about islands seen in the western part of the ocean.

The friars, as far as their poor means and scanty knowledge extended, were disposed to do everything to promote the object of my visit. They showed us all parts of the convent, which however has little to boast of, excepting the historical associations connected with it. The library was reduced to a few volumes, chiefly on ecclesiastical subjects, piled promiscuously in the corner of a vaulted chamber, and covered with dust. The chamber itself was curious, being the most ancient part of the edifice, and supposed to have formed part of a temple in the time of the Romans.

We ascended to the roof of the convent to enjoy the extensive prospect it commands. Immediately below the promontory on which it is situated, runs a narrow

but tolerably deep river, called the Domingo Rubio, which empties itself into the Tinto. It is the opinion of Don Luis Fernandez Pinzon, that the ships of Columbus were careened and fitted out in this river, as it affords better shelter than the Tinto, and its shores are not so shallow. A lonely bark of a fisherman was lying in this stream, and not far off, on a sandy point, were the ruins of an ancient watch-tower. From the roof of the convent, all the windings of the Odiel and the Tinto were to be seen, and their junction into the main stream, by which Columbus sallied forth to sea. In fact the convent serves as a landmark, being, from its lofty and solitary situation, visible for a considerable distance to vessels coming on the coast. On the opposite side I looked down upon the lonely road, through the wood of pine trees, by which the zealous guardian of the convent, Fray Juan Perez, departed at midnight on his mule, when he sought the camp of Ferdinand and Isabella in the Vega of Granada, to plead the project of Columbus before the Queen.

Having finished our inspection of the convent, we prepared to depart, and were accompanied to the outward portal by the two frairs. Our *calasero* brought his rattling and rickety vehicle for us to mount; at sight of which one of the monks exclaimed, with a smile, "Santa Maria! only to think! A *calesa* before the gate of the convent of La Rabida!" And,

indeed, so solitary and remote is this ancient edifice, and so simple is the mode of living of the people in this by-corner of Spain, that the appearance of even a sorry *calesa* might well cause astonishment. It is only singular that in such a by-corner the scheme of Columbus should have found intelligent listeners and coadjutors, after it had been discarded, almost with scoffing and contempt, from learned universities and splendid courts.

On our way back to the *hacienda*, we met Don Rafael, a younger son of Don Juan Fernandez, a fine young man, about twenty-one years of age, and who, his father informed me, was at present studying French and mathematics. He was well mounted on a spirited gray horse, and dressed in the Andalusian style, with the little round hat and jacket. He sat his horse gracefully, and managed him well. I was pleased with the frank and easy terms on which Don Juan appeared to live with his children. This I was inclined to think his favorite son, as I understood he was the only one that partook of the old gentleman's fondness for the chase, and that accompanied him in his hunting excursions.

A dinner had been prepared for us at the *hacienda*, by the wife of the *capitaz*, or overseer, who, with her husband, seemed to be well pleased with this visit from Don Juan, and to be confident of receiving a pleasant answer from the good-humored old gentle-

man whenever they addressed him. The dinner was served up about two o'clock, and was a most agreeable meal. The fruits and wines were from the estate, and were excellent; the rest of the provisions were from Moguer, for the adjacent village of Palos is too poor to furnish anything. A gentle breeze from the sea played through the hall, and tempered the summer heat. Indeed I do not know when I have seen a more enviable spot than this country retreat of the Pinzons. Its situation on a breezy hill, at no great distance from the sea, and in a southern climate, produces a happy temperature, neither hot in summer nor cold in winter. It commands a beautiful prospect, and is surrounded by natural luxuries. The country abounds with game, the adjacent river affords abundant sport in fishing, both by day and night, and delightful excursions for those fond of sailing. During the busy seasons of rural life, and especially at the joyous period of vintage, the family pass some time here, accompanied by numerous guests, at which times, Don Juan assured me, there was no lack of amusements, both by land and water.

When we had dined, and taken the *siesta*, or afternoon nap, according to the Spanish custom in summer time, we set out on our return to Moguer, visiting the village of Palos in the way. Don Gabriel had been sent in advance to procure the keys of the village church, and to apprise the curate of our wish to

inspect the archives. The village consists principally of two streets of low whitewashed houses. Many of the inhabitants have very dark complexions, betraying a mixture of African blood.

On entering the village, we repaired to the lowly mansion of the curate. I had hoped to find him some such personage as the curate in *Don Quixote*, possessed of shrewdness and information in his limited sphere, and that I might gain some anecdotes from him concerning his parish, its worthies, its antiquities, and its historical events. Perhaps I might have done so at any other time, but, unfortunately, the curate was something of a sportsman, and had heard of some game among the neighboring hills. We met him just sallying forth from his house, and, I must confess, his appearance was picturesque. He was a short, broad, sturdy little man, and had doffed his cassock and broad clerical beaver, for a short jacket and a little round Andalusian hat; he had his gun in hand, and was on the point of mounting a donkey which had been led forth by an ancient withered handmaid. Fearful of being detained from his foray, he accosted my companion the moment he came in sight. "God preserve you, Señor Don Juan! I have received your message, and have but one answer to make. The archives have all been destroyed. We have no trace of anything you seek for—nothing—nothing. Don Rafael has the keys of the church.

You can examine it at your leisure—*Adios, caballero!*" With these words the galliard little curate mounted his donkey, thumped his ribs with the butt-end of his gun, and trotted off to the hills.

In our way to the church we passed by the ruins of what had once been a fair and spacious dwelling, greatly superior to the other houses of the village. This, Don Juan informed me, was an old family possession, but since they had removed from Palos it had fallen to decay for want of a tenant. It was probably the family residence of Martin Alonzo or Vicente Yañez Pinzon, in the time of Columbus.

We now arrived at the church of St. George, in the porch of which Columbus first proclaimed to the inhabitants of Palos the order of the sovereigns, that they should furnish him with ships for his great voyage of discovery. This edifice has lately been thoroughly repaired, and being of solid mason-work, promises to stand for ages, a monument of the discoverers. It stands outside of the village, on the brow of a hill, looking along a little valley toward the river. The remains of a Moorish arch prove it to have been a mosque in former times; just above it on the crest of the hill is the ruin of a Moorish castle.

I paused in the porch, and endeavored to recall the interesting scene that had taken place there, when Columbus, accompanied by the zealous friar Juan Perez, caused the public notary to read the royal or-

der in presence of the astonished *alcaldes*, *regidors*, and *alguazils;* but it is difficult to conceive the consternation that must have been struck into so remote a little community by this sudden apparition of an entire stranger among them, bearing a command that they should put their persons and ships at his disposal, and sail away with him into the unknown wilderness of the ocean.

The interior of the church has nothing remarkable, excepting a wooden image of St. George vanquishing the Dragon, which is erected over the high altar, and is the admiration of the good people of Palos, who bear it about the streets in grand procession on the anniversary of the saint. This group existed in the time of Columbus, and now flourishes in renovated youth and splendor, having been newly painted and gilded, and the countenance of the saint rendered peculiarly blooming and lustrous.

Having finished the examination of the church, we resumed our seats in the *calesa* and returned to Moguer. One thing only remained to fulfil the object of my pilgrimage. This was to visit the chapel of the convent of Santa Clara. When Columbus was in danger of being lost in a tempest on his way home from his great voyage of discovery, he made a vow that should he be spared, he would watch and pray one whole night in this chapel; a vow which he doubtless fulfilled immediately after his arrival.

My kind and attentive friend, Don Juan, conducted me to the convent. It is the wealthiest in Moguer, and belongs to a sisterhood of Franciscan nuns. The chapel is large and ornamented with some degree of richness, particularly the part above the high altar, which is embellished by magnificent monuments of the brave family of the Puerto Carreros, the ancient lords of Moguer, and renowned in Moorish warfare. The alabaster effigies of distinguished warriors of that house and of their wives and sisters, lie side by side with folded hands, on tombs immediately before the altar, while others recline in deep niches on either side. The night had closed in by the time I entered the church, which made the scene more impressive. A few votive lamps shed a dim light about the interior. Their beams were feebly reflected by the gilded work of the high altar and the frames of the surrounding paintings, and rested upon the marble figures of the warriors and dames lying in the monumental repose of ages. The solemn pile must have presented much the same appearance when the pious discoverer performed his vigil, kneeling before this very altar and praying and watching throughout the night, and pouring forth heartfelt praises for having been spared to accomplish his sublime discovery.

I have now completed the main purpose of my journey, having visited the various places connected with the story of Columbus. It was highly gratifying to

find some of them so little changed though so great a space of time had intervened; but in this quiet nook of Spain, so far removed from the main thoroughfare, the lapse of time produces but few violent revolutions. Nothing, however, had surprised and gratified me more than the continued stability of the Pinzon family. On the morning after my excursion to Palos, chance gave me an opportunity of seeing something of the interior of most of their households. Having a curiosity to visit the remains of a Moorish castle, once the citadel of Moguer, Don Fernandez undertook to show me a tower which served as a magazine of wine to one of the Pinzon family. In seeking for the key we were sent from house to house of nearly the whole connection. All appeared to be living in that golden mean equally removed from the wants and superfluities of life, and all to be happily interwoven by kind and cordial habits of intimacy. We found the females of the family generally seated in the *patios*, or central courts of their dwellings, beneath the shade of awnings and among shrubs and flowers. Here the Andalusian ladies are accustomed to pass their mornings at work, surrounded by their handmaids, in the primitive, or, rather, Oriental style. In the porches of some of the houses I observed the coat-of-arms granted to the family by Charles V., hung up like a picture in a frame. Over the door of Don Luis, the naval officer, it was carved on an escutcheon of stone,

and colored. I had gathered many particulars of the family also from conversation with Don Juan, and from the family legend lent me by Don Luis. From all that I could learn it would appear that the lapse of nearly three centuries and a half has made but little change in the condition of the Pinzons. From generation to generation they have retained the same fair standing and reputable name throughout the neighborhood, filling offices of public trust and dignity, and possessing great influence over their fellow-citizens by their good sense and good conduct. How rare is it to see such an instance of stability of fortune in this fluctuating world, and how truly honorable is this hereditary respectability, which has been secured by no titles nor entails, but perpetuated merely by the innate worth of the race! I declare to you that the most illustrious descents of mere titled rank could never command the sincere respect and cordial regard with which I contemplated this stanch and enduring family, which for three centuries and a half has stood merely upon its virtues.

As I was to set off on my return to Seville before two o'clock, I partook of a farewell repast at the house of Don Juan, between twelve and one, and then took leave of his household with sincere regret. The good old gentleman, with the courtesy, or rather the cordiality, of a true Spaniard, accompanied me to the *posada*, to see me off. I had dispensed but little money in the

posada—thanks to the hospitality of the Pinzons—yet the Spanish pride of my host and hostess seemed pleased that I had preferred their humble chamber and the scanty bed they had provided me to the spacious mansion of Don Juan; and when I expressed my thanks for their kindness and attention, and regaled mine host with a few choice cigars, the heart of the poor man was overcome. He seized me by both hands and gave me a parting benediction, and then ran after the *calasero* to enjoin him to take particular care of me during my journey.

Taking a hearty leave of my excellent friend Don Juan, who had been unremitting in his attentions to me to the last moment, I now set off on my wayfaring, gratified to the utmost with my visit, and full of kind and grateful feelings towards Moguer and its hospitable inhabitants.

END OF VOL. I.

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